ACROSS / A16
METRO / A22
BUSINESS / B1

Mike A is A-'OK' in his 'Opisina ng Kabiyak'

400 cars smuggled weekly in Cebu since 2006

SC orders oil firms to vacate Pandacan depot in 5 years

Gov't to offer OFWs $100M in retail bonds

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
OPISINANG PAHALAK

40% of Pinoys believe in Cupid, survey shows

NBI 'raids' Lozada office

Witness says seizure of papers is persecution

By Tina G. Santos and Julier Ledesma Jordans

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo's administration tightens the screws on whistle-blower Rodolfo Noel Lozada Jr.

On Tuesday afternoon, an agent of the National Bureau of Investigation arrest to Lozada's former office at Philippine Forest Corp. (Philforest) in Taguig City looking for documents that may be used in pressing corruption charges against him, according to the NBI and the Department of Justice.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the powers of Lozada would show that there were no "secret votes" to the presidency.

Media reports of the NBI move against Lozada coincided with the publication of billionaire aide in major newspapers by a little-known group calling itself Kompreso ng Mamamayan, declaring that Lozada was no "hero" and calling for his investigation "for the irregularities he honestly committed as government official."

Lozada had a different ac-

FULL SUPPORTING CAST "The tyranny of Imperial Manila does not reflect the sentiments of our people in the countryside," the manifesto supporting President Arroyo states in part. It was signed by 49 governors of the League of Provinces of the Philippines (LPP) during its second general assembly on Wednesday at the Villa Del Rey in Pili, Camarines del Sur. Most of the gathering is LPP chair and Camarines Sur Luis Raymund Villafuerte (left, beside Ms Arroyo).

Opposition: Cha-cha to divert focus from scandal

By Michael Lim Ubac, Norman Bordadora and Jovanie Aning

MANY OF THE PRESS FOR Charter change (Cha-cha) adding fuel to protests against the Arroyo administration, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita yesterday called on administration allies in local government units to stop the Senate adamant in adopting a federal system of government.

But Senate President Manuel Villar believed the revival of the Cha-cha campaign was but an attempt to divert the public's attention from fresh revelations linking Malacañang to the anomalous National Broadband Network (NBN) deal.

Villar called the Cha-cha campaign a "knee-jerk reaction" to fresh calls on Ms Arroyo to resign.

Sen. Loren Legarda said the new

FVR still for GMA; governors go all out

By Cynthia D. Balana and Bobby Q. Lakandazon
Inquirer Southern Luzon Bureau

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo is not without strong support.

According to former President Fidel V. Ramos, the call for Ms Arroyo's resignation or removal will be all for naught.

Speaking to the business community in Makati City on Tuesday night, Ramos said any move to unseat a President should have the support of leaders of all sectors of society.

But he said he was supporting Ms Arroyo "in the absence of a better alternative."

In Pili, Camarines Sur, governors pledged unequivocal support for the President during yesterday's 2nd General Assembly of the League of Provinces of the Philippines (LPP), where she was the guest of honor and keynote speaker.

Noli tops survey for 2010 bets

By Cynthia D. Balana and Bill C. Cabacungan Jr.

VICE PRESIDENT NOLI DE Castro yesterday said he was humbled by the results of a Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey showing him the top choice of voters for the 2010 presidential election.

"As a humble public servant, I thank the people for appreciating the dedication I have given to my work. I value more than anything else, the trust and confidence given to me by my people," he said.

SWS said it could be a four-way race for the presidency in 2010.

Trailing behind De Castro in the survey were Senate President Manuel Villar Jr., Sen. Loren Legarda and Sen. Manuel Roxas.

The New 30 to Dec. 3, 2007 survey showed 30 percent of the respondents choosing De

PNP denies mystery man in safe house

By Tarra Quismundo and Dona Z. Pazzibugan

IF THE MYSTERY MAN allegedly linked to pick-up Rodolfo Noel Lozada Jr. in the stopped out of the plane from Hong Kong has become persona grata to because he wanted to protect himself and his family, the chief of the Philippine National Police detention Security Group (PNP-SDG) said yesterday.

Chief Supt. Alfonso Ebreo, PNP-SDG chief, said retired

CLEAN SWEEP The NBI raided up Lozada's former office at Philippine Forest Corp. in Fort Bonifacio after the visit.

IBP, mutiny leaders, Church back Lozada

By Kristine L. Alave and Miles Diuet

RODOLFO "JOY" LOZADA JR. has gained support from a national group of lawyers, detained mutiny leaders and the Catholic Church.

The Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) yesterday announced that it would join tomorrow's mass protests to denounce the corruption exposed by the "very, very credible witness" in the Senate inquiry into the scrapped National Broadband Network (NBN) contract awarded to China's ZTE Corp.

"We are greatly appalled and concerned by the revelations made by ... Lozada[during the Senate investigation," IBP president and chair Feliciano Bautista said at a press conference held after the group's emergency board meeting.

"We condemn and oppose all kinds of corruption. There can be no exception of greed. We call for zero corruption on all public procurements," the lawyer said.

Salonga: Enough evidence vs Mike A, Abalos, Neri

By Norman Bordadora

THE ATTORNEY FROM OF THE $329-million National Broadband Network (NBN) deal has produced enough evidence that can be used to prosecute Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo, Benjamin Abalos Jr. and Romulo Neri, former Senate President Jovito Salonga said yesterday.

Salonga said even President Macapagal-Arroyo could be held accountable and impeached in connection with the allegedly anomalous contract after she went to Boao, China, to witness the signing of the contract with Chinese firm ZTE Corp.

RECOMMENDATION Salonga calls for raps in the NBN-ZTE principals, says Salonga.

FULL COURT PRESS Saying it is joining "the parliament of the streets" on Friday, the IBP declares support for the Senate over moves during a presser on Wednesday. From left are Rodolfo Urdaneneta, chair Feliciano Bautista, Marilyn Maglaya and Abelardo Estrada.

Obama whips Clinton in 3 US primaries

WASHINGTON—BARACK OBAMA powered past Hillary Rodham Clinton in the race for Democratic nomination delegates on a night of triumph interrupted with overwhelming primary victories in Maryland, Virginia and Washington, D.C.

John McCain won all three Republican primaries in and entered the US capitol on Tuesday adding to his unassailable lead in delegates for the Republican nomination.

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Palace won't stop 'Hello Garci'

By Michael Lim Ubac

ROWING TO THE SUPREME Court, Malacañang yesterday said it would not block any attempt to revive the inquiry into the "Hello Garci" wiretapping scandal, which suggested that President Macapagal-Arroyo and former election official Virgilio Garcillano tried to rig the 2004 poll results.

"Maybe, that's the intention [of the Supreme Court ruling]," said Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita when asked about the implications of the ruling at a press conference.

Anti-Wiretapping Law

The high court's decision is expected to be released on Friday.

Ermita said the court ruling nullified the memorandum issued by the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) to telecom and radio stations that their licenses would be canceled if they air the "Hello Garci" tapes.

Ermita was told by Malacañang lawyers that the 9-6 voting pertained to prohibitions against the government's frozen powers over officials, to talk so much about it as though they are trying to scare the people from using that (Garci tapes) material."

He, however, said that the ruling did not bar the government from prosecuting people who might have violated Republic Act No. 4200, otherwise known as the Anti-Wiretapping Law.

"If there are people who used these tapes(), let's check provisions of RA 4200 and see whether that would fall within prohibited acts()," said Ermita.

Asked whether reopening the "Hello Garci" case, or pursuing a closer look at the Catholic bishops' have suggested, would provide people to protest against the government, Ermita said:

"I don't know if it's correct to say that the Supreme Court is allowing the banning, or reopening of the Garci case. Whatever happens on the Supreme Court's ruling, I guess, it will have to be done according to the provisions of Republic Act 4200."

In August last year, instead of resorting to the wiretapping scandal through congressional inquiries, Mr. Arroyo urged Congress, including the opposition-dominated Senate, to focus on legislations to increase economic gains.

GMA cancels Baguio trip

By Michael Lim Ubac

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO has canceled her trip to Baguio City scheduled for tomorrow in the wake of the planned power seizure to be staged in Metro Manila by militant groups led by the Bayan Muna bloc and the civil society group "Ulosan Ang Power Monopolyo."

Arroyo's spokesman Ignacio Bunye said the President's original itinerary would have taken her to the City of Pines on Friday afternoon where she was to lead the groundbreaking of a school building project.

She was also scheduled on Saturday to speak before the Alumni Association of the Philippine Military Academy.

The only thing left in the presidential schedule is the inspection of an airport and immigration of a school building in Bonifacio, Fort Bonifacio and Taguig.

A Malacañang official, who declined to be identified since he was not authorized to speak on the matter, said the planned big protest maneuver could have influenced the Presidential Protocol Office to forgo the Baguio trip.

"There's security risks," said the official. "Because there's a threat of big protest actions on Friday".

In more like-there-it's-standard operating procedure for the sitting President to remain in the seat of power while a Malacañang and the office.

Serenade at the Palace

Today, the President will lastly take a pause from the affairs of the state as she will be serenaded by the famous "Tin Antonian maestro Richard Cinco-ro-ro-ro-ro-ring.

The Valentine's Day event dubbed "Media fellowship with President Arroyo and Richard Carpenter" which will also feature local singer Claire dela Fuente will be held at noon at the Presidential Reception Hall in Malacañan Hall.

"There was an award yesterday at the President's husband, Jose Miguel Arroyo, will be with her during the event, but the Cabinet and media are invited.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita expected the doings to sizzle here with the interest in Metro Manila today.

"She is very focused. I can imagine that she will go to places where she will congratulate or launch projects," said Ermita, who said he was not privy to the "private" schedule of the First Couple.

Deputy Presidential Spokesperson Anthony Golez said Carpenter would first call on President Arroyo.

"Mr. Carpenter will be accompanied by Claire dela Fuente, the Karen Carpenter of the Philippines," to relive the famous days of the Carpenter brother-and-sister," said Golez.

It will also be an opportunity for Dela Fuente to launch her new album.

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WHAT'S INSIDE

ENRILE WANTS
Teves probed for graft
A4

REBEL SOLDIERS
protest spy camera in court
A18

Housing fair for teachers launched

By Jerry E. Esplanada

THEY ARE THE "MOST IMPORTANT" workers in our society, yet they are also among the least paid."

That said Vice President Noli de Castro as he hailed the country's nearly 500,000 public school teachers during yesterday's launch of the first ever housing fair for teachers at the Department of Education (DepEd) complex in Pasig City.

"We recognize their hard work and commitment to the task of educating our children despite their low incomes," said De Castro, also chair of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC).

In a statement, Education Secretary Jesli Lapus said "giving our teachers the benefits they deserve, such as a house they can call their own, remains our paramount concern."

"The housing fair is one way of exposing them to their incidences by giving them the information on how to own decent homes at the most affordable terms," Lapus said.

The activity aims to serve DepEd personnel and from Metro Manila and the provinces of Rizal, Bulacan, Cavite and Laguna.

In Metro Manila alone, more than 10,000 DepEd employees have expressed interest in the housing program, according to Lapus.

A 1999 study commissioned by the government showed that at least 22 percent, or 90,400 public school teachers do not own a house.

EDSA RITES

Palace eyes reconciliation

ROCKED BY A NEW SCANDAL, the Arroyo administration is looking to the 22nd anniversary of the first Edsa people power revolution of 1986 as an occasion to reconcile with its political enemies.

After deliberately deciding not to mark the anniversary of the second Edsa uprising last month, Malacañang said it intends to celebrate the anniversary of the first Edsa two weeks from now, with a reunion of the two antithetic Presidents Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and her predecessor—former President Corazon Aquino. Fidel Ramos and Joseph Estrada.

The first people power uprising in February 1986 ousted 21 years of repressive rule by the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, who was replaced by Aquino.

The second Edsa uprising of 2001 ousted Estrada who was impeached for corruption and incompetence, and brought the then Vice President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to power.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, chair of the Edsa Commission, told reporters there will be activities to mark the Edsa I anniversary from Feb. 22 to 25.

Reliving the spirit

And as in past celebrations, Ermita said the Edsa Commission, which had been preparing for the celebration since a month ago, will be inviting Aquino, Ramos and Estrada to attend activities there.

He said the objective of the exercise was to "relive the spirit of Edsa and bring that spirit alive and gather everyone."

"The objective really is to bring everybody together. After all we are celebrating a very important national event, the restoration of democracy and everybody wants that," Ermita told reporters.

"We have to celebrate because we must call the people's attention to the spirit of Edsa and what is the spirit of Edsa I? The spirit of oneness, unity of the purpose, it's the spontaneity of people's movement known as people power," he said.

Asked why the government would want to celebrate Edsa I when it decided to skip celebrations for Edsa II, Ermita indicated that the celebrations for Edsa II were set aside out of consideration for Estrada, who had just been granted a pardon after being convicted for plunder.

Healing the wounds

"One of the 'bear-the-cold' [program] of the President is healing the wounds of Edsa. The characters of the other Edsas, especially Edsa II, are still around... Perhaps the President feels that as part of healing the wounds, it would be best not to emotionally remind the characters affected of what happened," he said.

Asked if there was a point to the celebrations with the political tension caused by tension between Senator Juan Ponce Enrile's revelations about Malacañang's alleged involvement in the allegedly rigged $329-million national broadband network project, Ermita said: "For more reasons [to celebrate] is the need to reconcile everybody. That's the beauty of democracy."

He said the President will be participating in the activities, which will include a Mass and a gathering at the Libingan ng mga Bayani in Fort Bonifacio to be attended by war veterans and the diplomatic corps.

Christine O. Avendaño

P867M released for poll automation

By Margaux C. Grey

THE DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET and Management (DBM) has finally released more than P867 million to the Commission on Elections for the conduct of the August 2008 elections in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), the Commission on Elections announced yesterday.

Comelec spokesperson James Arthur Jimenez said the release of the funds amounting to P867,229,000 means that the Comelec could now institute the bidding process for the automated election system in Mindanao.

Bid documents would be made available to prospective bidders today, Jimenez said.

He said a "Request for Proposal" drawn up with the help of the Advisory Council table for the automated election system, namely Direct Recording Electronic (DRE), and Optical Mark Reader (OMR) technology.

Drug use in schools not that bad – DepEd

By Jerry E. Esplanada

LESS THAN ONE PERCENT OF more than 3,600 public and private high school students—or 0.19 percent as reported earlier—have been found positive for illegal drug use, according to the Department of Education (DepEd).

The random drug tests were conducted during school year 2005-2006 by the Department of Health and the Dangerous Drugs Board in coordination with the DepEd.

Test results disclosed that out of 9,670 students, only 17 or 0.77 percent were confirmed positive for drug use, at least 50 of those students came from public high schools, said the DepEd.

The DepEd, however, did not say if similar drug tests were conducted by the government during the 2006-2007 and the current school years.

There are some 5.02 million public high school students and 1.29 million private high school students all over the country.

The random drug tests are allowed under Republic Act No. 9165, otherwise known as the "Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002," said the DepEd.

Director Thelma Isarias, director of the DepEd's Health and Nutrition Center (HNC), clarified that "the 10 percent figure (reported earlier) in some publications) was the result of a drug use survey conducted in both public and private schools way back in 1999."

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Enrile wants Teves probed for graft

By Cid Cabucungan Jr.

SENATORS JUAN PONCE ENRILE and Richard Gordon have called on the Ombudsman to investigate suspected irregularities in the Department of Finance and bodyguard that Batasan secretary Mikaguilo Teves would likely be harassed by the Commission on Appointments for On-Hold fees.

The two senators took Teves to task during CA hearings for ordering the tax exemption of Bill Mall cigarettes and his inaction on the alleged smuggling of power generators by plastic king William Gothiankee and an accomplice.

In an interview following the CA hearing yesterday, Enrile said he was skeptical whether Teves would get the powerful committee's nod. "We have to see if money passed from British investors Tchaco, makers of the Bill Mall brand, to any government official to determine whether there is a possible issue of graft. The Ombudsman can do this anytime," he said.

Teves has been under heavy fire for reversing a Bureau of Internal Revenue tax ruling and lowering the tax on Bill Mall cigarettes from P36 per pack to P8.74. Enrile said the move cost the government P1.08 billion in foregone revenues annually.

Gordon said that he found Teves' written "explanation" convincing then the DOF was already hard pressed to meet its collection targets.

Enrile said that much worse than the Bill Mall case was the P225 million in foregone revenues because of the failure of the DOF to use the power generators imported by Gothiankee and his Filipino partner, Norkuan Petrochemical Alliance (NPA).

Enrile noted that the generators were brought in ostensibly for exhibition in the country's own though they were intended for NPC plants alone.

"Evidently, the reservation by [Teves] does not undermine his role as Secretary of Finance," said Enrile.

Enrile said that along with Teves, Finance Undersecretary Gaudencio Mendoza should also be made to respond to the smuggling allegations.

'Multi-billion smuggling'

Gordon noted that Mendoza was also the director of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority where "multi-billion smuggling" reportedly flourished during his term.

"If Sen. [Teves and Mendoza] are seen as favoring these entities, we certainly cannot confirm them," said Gordon who said smuggling of fake cards the government more than P30 billion a year in lost taxes.

The petrochemical company had claimed that its power generators were smuggled, claiming that these were declared as "exempt" by the Board of Investments and would be re-exported to Singapore soon.

Bill Mall manufacturers, on the other hand, had said that they filed an appeal for reconsideration of the BIR tax levy with the DOF last year because their competitors were locally manufactured and the levy was almost double the retail price.

Ebdane confirmed

AFTER BEING WITHHELD Rules, Public Works Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane was finally confirmed by the Commission on Appointments yesterday.

Ebdane, a former national police chief, faced no more objections from senators and congressmen during the plenary session of the committee on the former yesterday.

Sen. Rolando Gordon delivered the speech sponsoring Ebdane's nomination. He said they shared the same room in Zamboanga. Ebdane was at the Senate gallery yesterday.

There was no mention of allegations that Ebdane helped spirit away ex-Commission on Elections commissioner Virgilio Garcillano at the height of the "Hello Garci" election fraud scandal three years ago.

The commission's deferred action on Finance Secretary Margarito Teves and Agrarian Reform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman.

Senate OKs bill to wipe vagrancy out of crimes' list

By Dona Pazolagues

THE SENATE HAS PASSED ON third and final reading a bill that would decriminalize "vagrancy"—a vague offense that has reportedly been used by police officers to make arbitrary arrests, extort money or even sexually abuse persons found loitering in public places.

Senate Bill 2968, approved on third and final reading Tuesday night, removes the provision for "vagrants" from Article 202 of the Revised Penal Code which says that anybody has no visible means of livelihood is presumed to be a vagrant.

The original law defined vagrants as "any person found loitering about public or semi-public buildings or places, or rambling or wandering about from place to place without any lawful or visible means of support."

The law also defined vagrants as anyone who associates with prostitutes, and sets a prison term and a fine from P200 to P2,000 on persons convicted for this offense.

One of the bill's authors, Sen. Francis Escudero said police authorities can no longer "selectively and conveniently" use vagrancy to arbitrary arrests.

"We see it all the time in the news. When anything goes wrong up people and no definite charge can be made, vagrancy comes in handy. Cases of this nature have already piled up in our justice system," he said.

Human rights groups have reported that the anti-vagrancy law has been used as a pretext for the arbitrary arrest and detention of women who have subsequently complained of rape, sexual abuse and other ill treatment by police officers.

In decriminalizing vagrancy, Escudero said police officers can pay more attention to graver offenses. The bill would decongest the load of the justice system, he said.

Correction

IN "THE FIL-A ISSUE," a Sports article on Page A10 — "PVR joins Manglo golf" — misspelled the surname of the president of Monterrazas Industries Philippines Corp. His name is Mondalfo Ueki — not Ueki.

Readers may send their requests for corrections, clarifications or errors in the Big Deal, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 888 Building, Chino Roces Avenue extension, Makati City, fax No. 897-07-45-08, e-mail address deadesk@inquirer.com.ph.

Complaints about lack of fairness or objectivity may be sent by letter to Ellen Tordesillas, publisher, at the same address, by fax at 897-47-03-96, by e-mail at ellen@inquirer.com.ph or by fax No. 897-47-03-96, attn: Reader's Advocate (if phone number is 897-0000 local 546).

The Daily Gospel

Thursday, February 14, 2008
3rd Week of Lent
Cyril and Methodius

1st Reading: Jer 17:5-10, 13-14
Gospel: Lk 16:19-31

Jesus said to his disciples: "Sin and woe will attend, sink and sea will find. Search and the door will be opened. For everyone who asks, receives, whoever seeks, finds, and the door will be opened to him who knocks. Would any or you give a stone to your son when he asks for bread? Or give him a snake, when he asks for a fish? So bad as you are, you know how to give good things to your children. How much more, then, will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

"So, do to others whatever you would like others do to you: there you have the law and the Prophets."

Commentary:

The Lord invites us to bring our needs to Him, and to rely upon His help in response to our love. Whatever gives our virtue must be the Lord.

Consider this day what you really need in your life. What particular things do you need in order to follow the Lord? Do you need to ask for the virtue of patience? A greater sense of solidarity with the poor and love for them? Ask, and you will receive. Jesus tells us. Whatever the Lord has duty to grant. He shapes desires of your heart, and it is that the Lord never knows. We should ask more disappointed.

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Pray, don't sin, Cardinal Rosales advises lovers on Valentine's Day

By Marjoue C. Ortiz

"EXCLUSIVE MOMENTS" BETWEEN UNmarried couples could be dangerous, warned Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales. He advised young couples to attend Holy Mass or pray the rosary as an alternative activity on Valentine's Day.

"We advise everyone to be careful especially when spending time with one's boyfriend or girlfriend," Rosales said in an interview over Church-run Radio Veritas.

"Too much time spent with each other could eradicate certain boundaries; exclusive moments could be dangerous."

Rosales said "licensed to goodness" partners such as religious activities during special days are always best, he said.

"Young people could also look for good books to read and lend each other," he said, adding that people who really love each other should try to get to know each other better.

He said trying to find commonalities in their friendship, especially in the things they like and the activities they indulge in, is a very important goal for young people.

"This way, their relationship deepens and they could prepare for a beautiful, pure and happy future," Rosales said.

The Manila archbishop also criticized the materialism and commercialism associated with the modern celebration of Valentine's Day.

"Valentine's Day has become worldly. It is not wrong to celebrate love, but the celebration itself has become very mundane," Rosales said.

Commercialism has pervaded Valentine's Day with people making sure to buy material gifts for their loved ones whenever they go to malls, he lamented.

He added, "People now think of love as only the love between couples, which should not be."

He said the Church warns everyone, especially the youth, to guard against danger and sin deceitfully wrapped in material things.

"Love cannot be bought; love cannot be replaced with momentary happiness. True love comes from the heart and recognizes the need to respect one's beloved," Rosales said.

He stressed the need for people to be on guard against what is happening in modern society.

"I hope that people incorporate spiritual in their lives, focusing on their love for the Lord and following the steps of the Blessed," Rosales said.

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Airline pilots fill airwaves with love talk

By Terra Quiamanio

LOVE EVEN THE MONAVIA, LITERALLY.

Besides "10-4," exchanges of "I-4-U" fill the restricted aviation radio frequency on days like this as airline pilots deviate from strict transmission protocol to pursue the hearts of female air traffic controllers (ATCs).

Bits of smoke lines that range from the flattering to the unbelievable have become a regular part of radio communication between airline pilots and female ATCs at the Air Transportation Office's Manila Control Tower, where a third of the 30 member controller team are women.

"There's this pilot who flies from Los Angeles, a seven flight that takes eight to 12 hours, and that arrives early morning between 4 a.m. and 5 a.m. He will say after I clear him for landing: 'Oh, it's so nice to hear a lady's voice after a long flight. It's like coming home to my mistress rather than to my wife," veteran ATC Marlene Gregorio told the Inquirer.

"I have received that comment several times. That's how I've encountered it. I often think, should I answer him? But I just say 'roger,'" she said, chuckling at the recollection.

Valentine's Day or not, pickup lines often make it to official radio transmissions even while such romantic quips are supposed to be barred under radio regulations, Gregorio said.

Pilots often seize the chance to make their sweet advances during the few minutes they are in touch with female ATCs to get clearance for takeoffs and landings at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA), said Gregorio who will mark her 26th year in service next month.

"We are not allowed actually to talk about such things over the frequency for you let it pass... It's what you call superfluous transmission, where [any] unnecessary standard phraseology is transmitted," said Gregorio.

She said pilots of regional flights, those with frequent trips from Asian cities to Manila, transmitted the sweet nothings most often and at times would even go beyond the radio to express their romantic intent.

"Sometimes pilots with different [accents], when we ask them if they understood our transmission and we say 'how do you read me?' They'd say: 'You're coming in sweet and lovely,'" she said.

"What they have flights to Manila, they send us carfools, they send flowers. So if they are here twice a week, we get flowers and chocolates twice a week," she continued.

Some would even ask ATCs out on dates they were to spend the night in Manila.

But has anyone said "oops" to the advances?

"Some agree to simple dinners. The polite part by the tower then take the ATCs to dinner. You can't avoid that relationships would develop because they become close," she said.

Noli tops survey for 2010 bets

From page A1

Cuneo, 27 percent, Villar, 25 percent, Legarda...and 20 percent, Nograles.

"Twelve percent could not give an answer, and 5 percent said they had no one to recommend," SWS said in a statement released earlier this month.

Survey questions

The respondents were asked the question: "Under the present Constitution, the term of President Arroyo is only up to the year 2010, and there will be no election for President in May 2010. Who in your opinion are the good leaders who should succeed President Arroyo as President?"

SWS said no list of names was provided and respondents were allowed to give up to three names.

Other names that emerged included Sen. Francis Escudero (15 percent), Sen. Panfilo Lacson (13 percent), former President Joseph Estrada (9 percent), Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago (4 percent), Sen. Jejomar Binay (3 percent), Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano (3 percent), Sen. Francis Pangilinan (2 percent), and Sen. Gregorio Honasan (2 percent).

The survey used face-to-face interviews of 1,200 adults, who were divided into random samples of 300 each in Metro Manila, the rest of Luzon, the Visayas, and Mindanao. The survey had a margin of error of ± 3 percentage points.

The same question was asked by SWS in its survey on Sept. 2-5, 2007.

At that time, Legarda was No. 1 with 44 percent. She was followed by De Castro (23 percent), Villar (18 percent), and Lacson (18 percent).

'One of us'

Saying that De Castro "is one of us," Mitrevelong welcomed the SWS survey results.

"[It's good to hear that she is] front runner in the survey," Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said at a press conference.

Hinting that De Castro could eventually get the endorsement of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Ermita said De Castro "is our Constitution it is indeed the rightful successor" of Ms Arroyo.

"We are happy about that," Ermita said, but warned that anything could happen between now and 2010.

Ermita said the "performance" of De Castro would be used as a gauge "in on we're up to the time when the time to test."

Snap polls

Should Mr Arroyo step down, Legarda said the country should immediately hold snap elections because De Castro was unfit to succeed the President.

'Why speak only now?'

"If [De Castro] cannot be a constitutional successor because his position as Vice President is clouded and this is clear from the false election returns which are thrown as evidence to the Supreme Court. One motive for revocation/arrest is still pending," said Legarda, who expressed willingness to fight De Castro in 2010 for the presidency.

Legarda expressed surprise that De Castro had spoken out against corruption in the Arroyo administration by supporting the testimony of Rodolfo Noel Lozada Jr. on the Macapagal-Arroyo/Jose "Jun-Jun" Pidal-Neri/Mike Defensor/Romulo Neri (NBN) deal.

'Why speak only now?'

"He (de Castro) has been hiding under the skirt of Am Gio [Mrs Arroyo] for the last four years, and he could not speak out against corruption. Why? Why speak only now?" Legarda told reporters.

De Castro beat Legarda in the race for the vice presidency in 2004, but Legarda has challenged his victory citing forged electoral forms as evidence that his former broadcasting partner benefited from the massive fraud of election results that allowed Mr Arroyo to beat Legarda's running mate, the late actor-director Fernando Poe Jr.

Too late the hero

"It's too late for him to find his voice. De Castro is not the hero who has come to rescue the day in the last four years! While opposition have not been remiss in speaking out against corruption no hero came in to only now that he feel finally seen the light? Where has he been all these years?" Legarda added.

"Corruption didn't happen just this week. What pitiful irony you have stepping in his four years?" she said.

De Castro does not have the "moral ascendancy to speak about corruption and fraud because he is guilty of both," Legarda said.

"Pati (should be your headline) he is guilty of corruption and fraud and you can quote me on that — that," she said.

Undaunted

De Castro said he was undaunted by the attack still to be done because of the support of the people.

"The support of our countrymen is our inspiration and source of strength to continue to face the challenges ahead," he said.

"Bearing the mandate of the people, it is our duty to continue the mission of being the true voice of the people," he added. With Ellen Tordesillas, Inquirer Research

DE CASTRO

Kabayan's 'killer' joke turns off reporter

VICE PRESIDENT NOLI DE CASTRO found himself in hot water yesterday when he jokingly ordered his bodyguards to kill a reporter for asking critical questions about his past.

Tabloid reporter Jeffrey Tiangco said he was appalled by De Castro's reaction when he asked whether the Vice President was ready to succeed President Macapagal-Arroyo, who is embroiled in a corruption scandal.

De Castro turned to his bodyguards and said: "Cite you kill that guy."

When Tiangco later asked De Castro about the remark, the Vice President answered: "I was just kidding you."

The sick joke came amid international outrage over hundreds of extrajudicial killings in the Philippines of activists, journalists and most children suspected of engaging in party crimes.

De Castro, formerly a broadcaster, has come into the spotlight in recent days following allegations by a self-confessed ex-hitman that the President's husband and a key ally are involved in a corruption scandal.

This has revived popular calls for the actor's resignation, raising the prospect that De Castro may succeed her.

De Castro has said that he and his wife have decided to forgo their terms in 2010. AFP

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Obama crushes Clinton . . .

Front page A1

Obama told shouting supporters in Madison, Wisconsin.

"But we know how much further we have to go," the Illinois senator added, celebrating eight straight victories over Clinton. He former first lady who is now struggling in a race she once seemed destined to win.

The Associated Press count of delegates showed Obama with 1,223, including separately chosen party and elected officials known as super delegates. Clinton had 1,100 delegates, falling behind for the first time since the campaign began. Neither candidate, however, was close to the 2,025 delegates needed to win the nomination at the party's national convention this summer in Denver.

75% of vote in capital

The victories of Obama were by large margins—he was gaining about 75 percent of the vote in the nation's capital and nearly two-thirds in Virginia. In Maryland, he was winning close to 60 percent of the vote.

Obama was at least 95 delegates to Tuesday's primaries, with 78 still to be awarded. Clinton was at least 23.

By contrast, Clinton was scrambling to reveal her campaign in the midst of a losing streak. Her deputy campaign manager resigned, the second high-level departure in as many days.

Campaigning in Texas, where she hopes to triumph on March 4, Clinton said she was looking ahead, anyhow.

"I'm tested. I'm ready. Now here's more to happen," she said.

McCain sweep

McCain turned back a determined challenge from former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee in Maryland, Virginia and Washington, D.C. The famous amiable conservative Huckabee, his sole remaining major rival and a potential vice presidential running mate, first hoisted his focus on the Democrats.

"We know where either of their candidates will finish on election day," he said of her rival, McCain, a former Vietnam prisoner of war, told supporters in Alexandria, Virginia. "They will point a picture of the world in which America's enemies are a greater threat to our security than the indecisive intentions of an enemy that despises us and our ideals."

McCain's victory in Virginia was a relatively close one, the result of an outpouring of religious conservatives who backed Huckabee.

Even in 43 Republican votes said they were born again or evangelical Christians—twice as many called themselves members of the religious right in 2006—and nearly 70 percent of them supported Huckabee, an ordained Baptist minister.

Virginia voters could vote on either primary in their state. In a twist, Huckabee was running slightly ahead of McCain among independents, who cast about a fifth of the Republican votes there.

Exit polls

Interviews with voters leaving the polls showed Obama narrowly defeated Clinton among white voters in Virginia, 52 percent to 47 percent. He lost by far more than that to a Southern man and only the fourth time he has done so in a competitive primary this year. Clinton won the white vote by 10 percentage points in Maryland.

Obama won 89 percent of the black vote in Virginia and almost as much in Maryland. Clinton won a majority of white women in both states, though by less than she is accustomed to. She won among voters over in Virginia, and they split that vote in Maryland.

In all, there were 166 Democratic delegates at stake on Tuesday.

Obama earned past Clinton in the delegate count on the basis of his day's primaries and newly released results from last Saturday's Washington state caucuses. Additional delegates still to be allocated from his new victories were certain to add to his lead.

Even so, the Democratic race remains somewhat deeply the fact that Obama had lost his long-held lead in delegates, chief among them the superdelegates who form the campaign's establishment.

92 for McCain

McCain picked up at least 92 of the 113 delegates at stake in the three Republican races.

The AP count showed McCain with 821 delegates. Former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, who dropped out of the race last week, had 269. Huckabee had 241, and Texas Rep. Ron Paul had 14.

It takes 1,191 delegates to clinch the Republican nomination. The next primaries come in 34. Pati, Wisconsin, and McCain appears to be on track to reach the target by late April. AP

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NBI raids Lozada office in search of documents

From page A1

count of the incident.

"They raided my office and the people who replaced me were those who betrayed me," Lozada told the business.

"This is plain and simple persecution," he said.

"They opened my filing cabinets, they took out my personal stuff. They were moving against me with lightning speed," Lozada said, recounting what his staff had told him. "They have no right to open these."

Lozada was CEO of Philforest, which is under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, until he quit last week when he decided he could not use this government line and testify in a Senate inquiry on the controversial National Broadband Network (NBN) project with China's ZTE Corp.

Allan Custodio, chief of the NBI's surgical's division, and agent Marlon Tanil went to Philforest with an NBI request for certified true copies of some documents concerning Lozada.

Not a raid

"It was not a raid, only one agent arrest there and he was even unarmed. And why would we conduct a raid? It's a government office," Custodio said when asked about media reports that the NBI invaded less Lozada's office. He said Lozada's office assistant remained.

"We had a request letter duly received by Mr. Santos," Custodio said. "Then the documents were turned over by Mr. Santos to Agent Tanil ... Some employees were even asked to photocopy the documents."

Philforest officer in charge Fe-ario Belleza-Santos told reporters that he provided some documents in the Philforest incorporation and promised to look for others the NBI was seeking.

Victor Bernar, NBI deputy director for special investigation services, said Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez had ordered the creation of a panel that would look into the ZTE deal. He added that the bureau was tasked to help in the probe by gathering documents.

"Some three new allegations of graft mentioned against Lozada during the Senate hearing, the bureau's intelligence division looks into that," Bernar said.

Custodio confirmed that there was no order from Gonzalez or any NBI higher-up to go to Philforest.

"Using the information we got from the Senate hearing as a basis, it was my own initiative to send an agent there, it's part of our fact-finding and documentgathering efforts," Custodio said. "We'll secure copies of documents so we could validate allegations of corruption against Mr. Lozada," the NBI official said.

He added that there was no need for a search warrant because they coordinated with a Philforest official.

Gonzalez yesterday also debunked reports of an NBI raid in Philforest, but he said the documents requested were in connection with the justice department's investigations of the ZTE deal.

Mr. Arroyo scrapped the $329-million project to hook up government offices nationwide via a state-owned Internet service following allegations of bribery and overprice that implicated her husband.

Lozada said he was abducted by soldiers on his return to Feb. 7 following a weeklong trip to Hong Kong upon advice by Mr. Arroyo's aides to avoid subpoenas in a Senate inquiry on the NBN scandal.

He said he had been lured to a consultant by former Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri to "moderate the greed" in the NBN transaction and did not want to testify because he said he could not lie.

Lozada said that while he was under police custody, he was made to sign papers saying he did not know about the NBN deal and that he was not kidnapped.

Santiago charges

Among the documents the NBI was looking for were papers supporting alleged irregularities revealed by Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago during a Senate hearing on Friday.

Santos said his office was able to provide the NBI only Philforest's incorporation papers and those pertaining to the purchase of a Toyota Camry and a four-wheel drive Toyota Hilux. He said he was looking into the other papers requested.

Santiago, adviser husband to a presidential adviser, on Friday showed copies of documents purportedly showing transactions hammered out without benefit of public bidding.

The contracts that Santiago mentioned included those concerning Gabriel Multimedia Services owned by Lozada's brother Ike also asked Lozada about his purchase of 25 imported goats at a total cost of P500,000 for which Lozada conceded was "expensive."

Mea culpa

Lozada did not deny Santiago's allegations and instead offered a "mea culpa."

Also protesting Bernar said an investigation on those who may be held liable for the irregularities in the NBN project were that the Office of the Ombudsman was conducting its own probe.

"I think it's only proper for the Office of the Ombudsman to do investigations for the moment and leave it to the Ombudsman," Tevesia said. *With reports from Leila B. Salaverria, Christine O. Avendaño, Aissle Dejas and Kristine L. Alave*

MINI FOREST Once the domain of Rodolfo Noel S. Lozada Jr., Philippine Forest Corp., as mandated agency of the DENR, is located inside the compound of the National Mapping and Resources Information Authority in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig. RICO DOMINO

GETTING THEIR GOAT Some 25 pure-bred Australian Boer goats graze in a field of jatropha in the backyard of Lozada's former office. They cost P150,000 and a special fencing system, P125,000. Which encouraged opposition Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago had inquired at the Senate to which Lozada turned Head concurred with relish. JOVEN CAGUIOA

LOZADA'S SUCCESSOR Ennie Krishna Tacma comes over documents to NBI. JOVEN CAGUIOA

PNP denies mystery man in safe house; he's resting with family

From page A1

Army Sgt. Rodolfo Valeroso had taken a leave three weeks to be with his family and step out of the news surrounding Loretto's unusual visit from the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) on Feb. 5.

Miranda identified that Valeroso, initially identified as a policeman, was being kept in a safe house.

The true identity of Valeroso had been unclear. Initial statements by PNP chief Avelino Razon Jr. and other PNP officers accused Valeroso of the mystery man. In a radio interview last week, Razon said Valeroso was working with the DFNB. Lozada's lawyer, Atty. Philbert Ortiz, is under the DFNB. When the business verified the information with Razon, he said it was not true and that Valeroso was with the AMG.

He just asked my permission for him to take a vent and come over his family first. He doesn't want the public to know where he is, but he is not in a safe house," Miranda said when reached by phone yesterday.

Doesn't want to be involved

"He just doesn't want to be involved in controversy and he is afraid for the safety of his family and himself," Miranda said.

Miranda admitted that Valeroso was an AMG agent assigned in South Luzon at the airport when he arrived from Hong Kong at 6:40 p.m. on Feb. 5. However, he declined to give details of the incident to avoid compromising testimony before the Senate.

Lozada said he was abducted by six soldiers who took him at the valet after he disembarked from his plane, led up to the departure area on the third floor and ended with him in a van as he was driven around before he was turned over to police.

PNP and airport officials denied Lozada's claim.

Reenactment today

Members of the Senate blue ribbon committee are set to visit Nido 1 today for a reenactment of how airport and police officials took custody of Lozada.

The senators would look at the route that Nata security chief Angel Sciriolo and his companions claimed to have used to get Lozada out of the airport, avoiding the normal route.

Senate President Manuel Villar said the senators had found that the closed-circuit television (CCTV) footage on Lozada's arrival that was submitted by Naia Terminal Manager Alfonso Cusi had been edited.

The video contained only a brief black-and-white clip of incoming flights, said to be Lozada and the security men. The video was taken from a single camera.

Video incomplete

Villar said that since the CCTV footage was incomplete, the senators had decided to conduct their own inspection of the area.

He said if the film was tampered, it would show clearly that there was a cover-up attempt.

Villar said the senators would find this out during their inspection and put together pieces of the puzzle.

In a letter to Cusi on Tuesday, Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano, chair of the Senate blue ribbon committee, requested that the senators be shown the "normal route" that passengers are supposedly disembarking, and the actual route taken by Lozada.

Cusi, in his reply yesterday, promised to cooperate in the inspection but limited media coverage of the visit to the "minimum" "highly encouraged."

IBP, mutiny leaders, Church back Lozada

From page A1

reading from a statement.

Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV and Army Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim, both detained on coup d'etat charges, backed Lozada for his testimony.

"We praise the courage and patriotism displayed by Engineer Jun Lozada in his exposure of yet another series of condemnable acts by the GMA administration," Trillanes and Lim said in a signed statement handwritten by the senator and distributed to reporters in Camp Aguinaldo yesterday.

They added: "We only hope that his damning revelations would be enough to finally convince the Filipino people to stand up and assert their sovereign power to choose a government that would truly protect their rights and fight for their interests."

Logical, consistent

Bautista expressed the IBP's conviction that Lozada was telling the truth, saying the witness never wavered in his statements and remained "logical" in the narration of his involvement in the deal, as well as his abduction by some agents when he arrived from Hong Kong last week.

Bautista said his personal opinion was that Mr. Arroyo should heed the growing clamor for her to resign. (*See story on Page A1.*)

But he stressed that the IBP as a group was not calling on her to step down.

Bautista said the resignation call was "a sign" that the people were "very aware of the corruption in the government" and that Mr. Arroyo was "losing her grip on the allegations of the citizens."

Bautista also said Arroyo have denied the accusations.

Challenge to GMA

The IBP issued a "challenge" to President Macapagal-Arroyo to form an independent body that would include some of its members to look into Lozada's claims of bribery and overprice in the NBN-ZTE deal.

It said that if the President were sincere in her desire to put closure to the scandal and stamp out corruption, she should let an independent investigative body gain access to pertinent documents and to government officials privy to the details of the broadband project.

"We will support the creation of an independent citizens' commission that will continue the Senate investigation," the IBP said.

Code of Ethics

Bautista also said immediate action would be taken on complaints against lawyers who might have violated their oath and the profession's code of ethics in connection with the Senate inquiry into the NBN-ZTE deal.

He refused to name names, but said a lawyer who would have someone or sign a document was in violation of the code and his bar oath.

According to Lozada's statement in the Senate regarding his abduction by state agents, lawyer Antonio Bautista insisted that he sign a letter requesting police protection.

But Antonio Bautista, testifying under Senate oath, denied this.

A lawyer found guilty of violating the code of ethics and his bar oath faces sanctions ranging from reprimand to disbarment.

The IBP chief said there was as yet no complaint against Bautista.

Dissent without action

During a break at the court-martial hearing where he and 27 other Marine and Army officers are being tried, Danilo Lim said his group had sent Lozada "a note of support."

"We are all after the truth. Without the truth, we are bereft of morality," he said.

Lim also said: "Dissent without action is nonsense." It was the reason Lim has ordered where he, along with Trillanes and other Magdalo officers, pleaded to authorities last Nov. 29 after holding out at the Peninsula Manila hotel for almost five hours and selling for Mr. Arroyo's resignation.

Even the detained Marine Col. Ariel Querubin said he and the other officers implicated in the failed February 2006 power grab were in support of Lozada for telling the truth.

Querubin, joking he said Lozada would be in good hands if the government would decide to detain him along with the military officers accused of rebelling against the Arroyo administration.

"If he wants to be detained with us, we will take care of him because we're both searching for the truth," Querubin said, laughing.

Asked what his message was for Ronnie Neri, now the chair of the Commission on Higher Education, Querubin said in Filipino: "Be like Lozada."

'Mass for truth'

In an interview over Church-run Radio Veritas, Manila Archbishop Ledesma Cardinal Rosales praised Lozada and likened him to the outlawed hero Jose Rizal and the anti-opposition leader Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino Jr.

"Lozada I was right in deciding to come out with the truth," Rosales said, adding that the witness had the best intentions in testifying at the Senate.

In Bacolod City, Bishop Vicente Navarro called on the public to attend the "Mass for Truth" at the San Sebastian Cathedral tomorrow at 5:30 p.m.

Navarro said the Diocese of Bacolod was supporting Lozada in his decision to tell the truth about the NBN-ZTE deal.

"Lozada's revelations based on his personal knowledge of and involvement in the anomalous has confirmed once and for all the allegations of corrupt practices in the Arroyo government," the bishop said.

Navarro said he hoped the "Mass for Truth" initiated in the diocese would have a ripple effect throughout the country.

"We call on the President not to stand in the way of finding the truth and allow the process to continue to its conclusion," he said.

The bishop called on her and other government officials privy to irregular government transactions to come out and tell the truth.

Cebu City, too

He also called on the people to be vigilant and help ferret out the truth against corruption. He said these could be done by praying for Lozada and joining the "Mass for Truth."

In Cebu City, a similar Mass will be held on Monday at the Redemptorist Church, said Fr. Carmelo Diola, overall coordinating secretary of the Diliab Foundation.

Diola said the Mass was planned in response to the statement issued by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines calling for "concerned action" based on truth.

With reports from Michaela C. Ortiz in Manila; Carla F. Gomez and Jhunnex Napallacan, Inquirer Visayas

OFW HIRING GUIDELINES

Migrant groups reject new rules

By Jerome Aning

UNDER THE AMENDMENTS announced by the labor department, the new direct hiring guidelines for overseas Filipino workers should still be reported, DFA groups said yesterday.

This is because the most significant of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration's Memorandum Circular 04 was the government and not the OFW in mind, said the Center for Migrant Advocacy.

The MC-04 benefits the government by shifting the burden of attending to OFWs in distress to the private recruiting agencies or employers, "subject to onerous payments borne by the OFWs in the deployment process," said CMA executive director Ellene Sana in a letter to Labor Secretary Arturo Brion.

MC-04, which took effect on Jan. 28, requires foreign employers to secure a performance bond equivalent to three months' salary (about $3,000) and a $5,000 repatriation bond, for each OFW that they hire directly.

No guarantee

In a separate statement, the Middle East chapter of the Migrante International said the MC-04 was no guarantee that the rights and welfare of migrant workers would be protected.

"The government bond and repatriation bond cannot deter or stop an abusive foreign employer, especially here in the Middle East. Given undersupply like we have Filipino workers," said Migrante Kuwait secretary general Lolly Ann.

A bond would not prevent an employer from not paying the worker's salary or stipulated in the employment contract or unlawfully detaining his Filipino domestic helper, he said.

Likewise, if the employer could simply pass on the cost of the bond to the employee by deducting it from the worker's salary, he said.

On Tuesday, Brion announced that foreign employers whose governments require that they guarantee "protective mechanisms" for OFWs would be exempted from paying the required bonds specified by MC-04.

In her letter, Sana said the MC-04 was like "a mechanism to ensure that someone else, apart from government, becomes responsible for an OFW in distress."

"This would have been understandable and perhaps acceptable if only a few of our Filipino countrymen overseas is indeed out of choice and not out of necessity, the latter because there are no viable decent jobs back home in our country," she said.

She said the real purpose of MC-04 was clear: the Arroyo government wanting to leave the responsibility of taking care of the repatriation of distressed and stranded OFWs to the mercy of foreign employers by the requirements of performance bonds.

Contrary to RA 8042

The CMA said the OFWs and migrant groups were not consulted about the MC-04, resulting in "skewed conclusions and confusion" when it was announced.

Sana said the lack of consultation was contrary to the Migrant Workers Act of 1995, or RA 8042, which pledges government cooperation with nongovernment organizations in protecting OFWs and promoting their welfare.

"OFWs are not merely docile subjects and recipients of government policies and programs. Part of their empowerment, of course, is to stand up for their rights and be protected as to be visible, counted, consulted and be part of the governance structure," Sana said.

She added that POEA circular also established a "system" administered by the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration to notify the OFWs and to labor affairs overseas and other government agencies tasked to implement it.

Another question raised by the CMA referred to the POEA statement that "salaries," or those corresponding to the same employers, would not be covered by the MC-04 provided that the employer was represented by a licensed recruitment agency.

The CMA said it was common knowledge that most returns, in according contracts, whether with new or old employers, no longer go through recruitment agencies.

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UP launches search for '08 Gawad Plaridel

THE UP COLLEGE of Mass Communication (UP CMC) is now accepting nominations for the 36th UP Gawad Plaridel, which recognizes Filipino media practitioners who have excelled in any of the media (print, radio, film, television and new media) and have performed with the highest level of professional integrity in the interest of public service.

For 2008 the award will be given to an outstanding Community-based practitioner/literate.

The award is named after Marcelo H. del Pilar (nom de plume, Plaridel), the selfless propagandist whose views helped rally the nationalist movement in the 1880s.

Like Plaridel, the awardee must believe in the vision of a Philippine society that is egalitarian, participative, and progressive, and in media that are socially responsible, critical and vigilant, liberative and transformative, and free and independent.

Deadline for nominations is on March 31. The recipient of the UP Gawad Plaridel 2008 will be announced on May 5.

The UP Gawad Plaridel is given every July 4 to commemorate del Pilar's death anniversary.

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Soap making, marketing techniques at UP

The Diamond Skills and Livelihood Training Services will unveil its intensive marketing techniques in a one day intensive Soap Making Session at University of the Philippines campus on February 21, 2008, Saturday 10am-5pm. Courses on producing high quality yet low cost products such as pasteurized detergents, creams, glass and toilet bowl cleaner, liquid washing, car shampoo, deodorant, and herbal bath soap (cucumber, papaya, etc.) The training will be a 100th Alumni, Hostel Function Rooms at Vinzons Hall, Diliman, Quezon City. For inquiries call Libby 267-3386; 267-3037 and Aunt 0916-4799133

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Mike A is . . .

From page A1

where tons of letters urgently requesting government assistance through the Institutional of President Macapagal-Arroyo get sorted, endorsed, and removed daily to appropriate agencies for final action.

The office has its own stationery with a letterhead bearing the OK seal, a circular emblem featuring an eight-rayed sun and three stars, symbols of state derived from the Philippine flag.

"It was already in use when I got here," said Jacie Untalo-Soliman, chief of staff to lawyer Ana Abigail Arroyo, a.k.a. "AG."

She joined OK in 2003 at the third year of the Arroyo presidency, said Soliman, a public relations practitioner who had previously worked in the Palace under then Presidential Consultant Aquilino, and later in Asian Development Bank, Citibank and Cotabato.

OK is housed at the LTA Building on Pena Street, Legazpi Village, at the Makati commercial district.

In a phone interview yesterday, Soliman explained that PG himself did not sign OK letters, hence any document or an OK stationery that appears to have his signature should be dismissed as a fake.

"This the only one authorized to sign," she said. "I've sent out a memo saying that all communications from the OK should come from me, the chief of staff."

Soliman noted that since she became an Arroyo aide, "I have compiled in a thick folder (letters) from name-dropper claiming he has done this and that."

As an added measure against forgery, Soliman said, "last year we began using a dry seal. These days even Malacañang documents can be 'fabricated.'"

And the OK seal is printed on no other material but the stationery, she said. There are no OK IDs, car stickers, T-shirts, cloth patches, vests, pins, etc.

Exceptions would be whenever PG has a "message" printed on some souvenir program. The seal would normally go side by side with his photo, Soliman added.

Had there been attempts to pilfer OK stationeries? "I'm sure there were," she curtly replied.

Soliman said she would normally sign up to 20 OK referral letters daily, mostly for indigent persons needing assistance from the Department of Social Welfare and Development or the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office.

'Popularly known'

It was not immediately clear when the logo was introduced, but the Inquirer came across a press release of the state-run Philippine News Agency already mentioning "OK" in 2000.

The PNA material partly read:

"The Office of the First Gentleman (OFG), also popularly known as Opisina ng Kabiyak (OK), has become the partner of the administration of the country's second woman President in undertaking development initiatives for the improvement of the lives of the Filipinos, particularly the poor and the marginalized."

"However, Secretary Arroyo is quick to explain that he is a partner, outside government, focusing only on the President's busy governing the country. 'I can go and help the people who need help and the neglected sector of the society.'

'I don't meddle with government,' he further says.

"His work, according to the First Gentleman, highly complements the sound development programs of the Macapagal administration, especially those that mobilize private voluntary action."

Opposition:

From page A1

Charter change initiative would only "threaten" the country from its more pressing problems.

"Pressing out the trash on the roadside and ditching before our eyes and leaving the ones left relieve it is clear to the key to stopping government anomalies," she said.

"This also will only serve as another distraction for our country. We are already grappling with corruption issues which require our more immediate attention. The other, if at all, can wait," Legarda added.

Bemba said it was premature for Malacañang to send a signal to presidentiables, governors and other local officials to slow down or at least postpone the campaign to change the Constitution.

"Maybe we should slow down so that we will not be suspected of (any) effort to divert the attention [illegible]," he said at [illegible] since.

The Philippine [illegible] along with fellow [illegible] mer chief of staff [illegible] President Macapagal [illegible] the launch of the [illegible] on Tuesday.

Bedolfe Mad [illegible] the Senate probe of [illegible] Mr. dual with [illegible] linked the Presidential [illegible] "Hello" scheme, and [illegible] Hermina Chan Roq [illegible] deal.

Coincidental

Bemba dubbed [illegible] of" the launch of [illegible] drive.

"Some thought [illegible]

40% of Pinoys believe in ...

From page A1

Weather Stations.

The Fourth Quarter of 2007 Social Weather Survey also found that among those who believed in Cupid, over four out of five (85 percent) believed that they had already been struck by "Cupid's arrow."

Cupid is often depicted as a winged child who carries a bow and quiver full of arrows.

The survey specifically asked respondents: "Do you believe in Cupid?"

Belief in Cupid reached 49 percent in the Visayas, 47 percent in Metro Manila and 38 percent each in the balance of Luzon and Mindanao.

More believers in Class E

"It is relatively higher among Class E, with 46 percent, compared to Class D, with 39 percent, and Class ABC, with 36 percent," SWS said in a statement released yesterday.

Over half of those with live-in partners (51 percent) said they believed in Cupid, compared to those who were married (46 percent) or among those who are single or never married (37 percent).

Among women, about three in five (62 percent) with live-in partners said they believed in Cupid, compared to 42 percent among married women and 33 percent among single or never married women.

Among men of different status, however, belief in Cupid hardly varied. It was 43 percent both among men who were single or never married and men with live-in partners, while it was 38 percent among married men.

Meanwhile, the proportion of those "already struck by Cupid's arrow" was higher in Luzon outside of Metro Manila (68 percent), in the Visayas (63 percent) and in Metro Manila (54 percent), compared to Mindanao (38 percent).

"Across the board, majority of those who believe in Cupid say they have already been struck by his arrow," SWS noted.

Nonconmissioned

The nonconmissioned survey was conducted from Nov. 30 to Dec. 3, 2007, using face-to-face interviews with 1,200 adults divided into random samples of 300 each in Metro Manila, the rest of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

It had a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points. *Kara Pedrosa, Inquirer Research*

Government Warnin
is dangerous

Cha-cha to divert focus from scandal

of the people) to other a regular press confer-

Information Agency, Jose Infante, a for- economic adviser of 42 envoys, spearheaded mpaign in Legazpi City

ala Jr., star witness in the scrapped $329-mil- Efthal's ZTE Corp., has husband, Jose Miguel ber last Commission on ssion Abalos Sr. to the

s "purely coincidence, the renewed Cha-cha at this is intended to

divert attention. But President Arroyo has not yet revealed her take on Charter change. We don't want to divert (the people's attention away from ZTE scandal). We are not encouraging any talk about Cha-cha," Fresnia said.

Local officials could not be "pressured" from talking about Cha-cha considering the chance he it in the countryside, either, he said.

To disabuse the minds of the people, Fresnia said local governments should slow down. "That is the most that we can do at the moment," he said.

Suspicious timing

In a statement from abroad, Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said he fully supported moves to amend the Constitution to implement a federal system of government.

Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan found the timing of the Charter change campaign to be suspicious, coming on the heels of the scandal over alleged huge kickbacks in the aborted NBN deal.

"Charter change at this point is very untimely. They are again acting out a bad script," Pangilinan said.

Ermita acknowledged that Cha-cha's timing was "suspect" amid the Senate inquiry into the NBN deal.

Pan flames of discontent

He said Cha-cha bid for Charter change at a time when the administration was fighting off allegations of corruption and renewed calls for Ms Arroyo to step down could be easily misinterpreted as a plea to keep herself in power.

In the House of Representatives, Senior Deputy Minority Leader Hadji Gabai of Pambajao said Salonga's revival of Cha-cha initiatives might fan the flames of discontent.

"If Salonga thinks that he is doing the President a favor by reviving calls for Charter change, he might have another think coming," Gabai said in a forum.

Gabai noted that Cha-cha moves in the last Congress almost resulted in a huge rally ouside the government backed down.

Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo and Bantayan Rep. Carlos Padilla, an independent, shared the minorities' view that the proposal to shift to a federal system was meant to divert public attention from the NBN scandal.

Useless exercise

Cagayan de Oro Rep. Rufus Rodriguez warned governors that they would be rebuffed by the Supreme Court if they proceed ahead with an unconstitutional proposing a shift to federalism through a people's initiative.

A shift to federalism considered a revision that could be undertaken either through a constitutional convention (Concon) or a constituent assembly (Con-ass), he said.

"This will be a useless exercise because the Supreme Court has already ruled that in cases of revision, like fundamental changes, there are only two modes—Con-ass and Con-con," Rodriguez said.

The high tribunal in October 2006 ruled against the "people's initiative" of Ifugao Rep Baguia and the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines to amend the Charter to shift to parliamentary form of government.

The Supreme Court said the initiative failed to comply with the requirement that it must be directly proposed by the people, the court said.

Similar moves in House

Rodriguez said that the local officials' push for Charter change was tied to similar moves in the House of Representatives.

The committee on constitutional amendments is hearing resolutions proposing changes in the Charter including a shift from presidential to parliamentary form of government.

"These are all orchestrated. These people are planning to extend the term of the President. They're trying all avenues. These are all tied up," Rodriguez said.

Fresnia denied that Malacañang was behind the renewed drive to 'tinker' with the Constitution, ostensibly to set up a federal form of government.

He said the President had not yet spoken on the issue.

"She doesn't want to talk about Charter change because people can easily say that she is using this to extend her stay as head of government. That's why the President is avoiding that (she should) be talked about even with close cabinet members," said Fresnia.

To avert further political division, Rodriguez appealed to the President to order her allies in the local government unit and in the lower chamber to stop all these moves.

No Palace instruction

Speaker Prospero Nograles maintained that there was no instruction from Malacañang for the House to press ahead with the proposed changes to the Charter.

He said Malacañang had nothing to do with the fresh Charter change campaign.

"Malacañang has many problems. I don't think they want to enter into another controversy like that," he said.

If he had his way, Nograles said the election of delegates in a Con-con that would propose amendments should be held simultaneously with the national elections in 2010.

"It will shorten the mind of everybody else is (Cha-cha) is another ploy or extending her term," he said.

Administration critics said the proposal could lead to an overhaul of the Constitution to remove term limits and keep Ms Arroyo in power beyond the end of her term in 2010 whether as president or prime minister under a parliamentary setup.

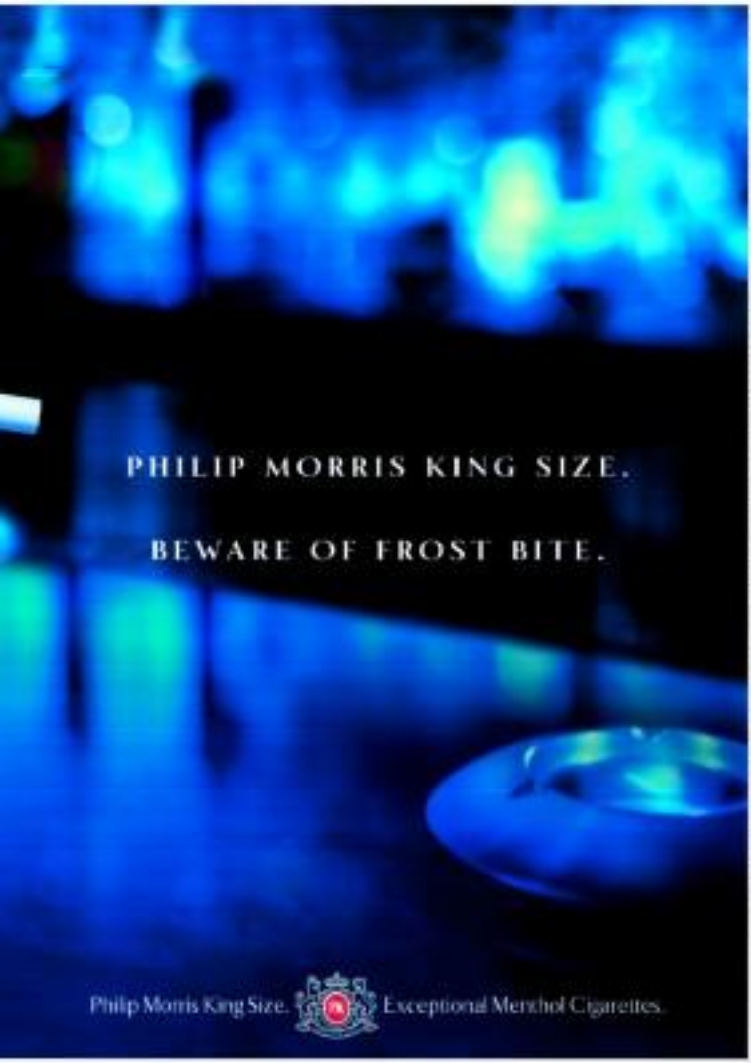
Not yet time

Padilla said it would be best to change the Charter after the 2010 elections to allow to insulate its proponents from charges of trying to extend their terms in office.

Administration Rep. Luis Villafuerte of Camarines Sur himself is against the renewed attempt to change the Charter to set up a federal form of government.

He said the adoption of a federal government means a revision of the Constitution and that would be unconstitutional if pursued via the people's initiative route.

"It's not yet time," Villafuerte said.



g: Cigarette smoking
to your health

FRIENDLY FOES Rodolfo Lozada, prime witness in the NBN-ZTE deal, is approached by his alleged relative Col. Paul Macaraeg before the start of the Senate hearing last Friday.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER Est. 23 Jan. 09

OPINION

Your say on your headlines: inquirer.opinion@inquirer.com.ph • Website: www.inquirer.com.ph/opinion

Brief diversion

EDITORIAL

THE ON-AGAIN-OFF-AGAIN CAMPAIGN TO AMEND the Constitution has been restarted once more with the holding of consultation meetings, first in Davao City and Legazpi City last Tuesday, followed by another one yesterday in Cebu City. Similar meetings are scheduled in the next two weeks in several other cities, with politicians closely identified with the Arroyo administration leading the effort supposedly to drum up popular support for a shift to a federal system of government. "The plan is to show there's a nationwide clamor for it," an official involved in the new campaign said.

Albay Gov. Joey Salceda, President Macapagal-Arroyo's favorite chief of staff and her trusted economic adviser, told a forum attended by local officials, businessmen and members of the academe that the shift to a federal system is meant to alter the present setup which concentrates too much resources in the national government and too much power in Cabinet members who are not even elected. The country is "overly fragmented," he said, so federalism is an idea whose time has come.

Maybe, but the timing is certainly off when it comes to getting the train on Charter change chugging again. In reluctantly people perceived it as a crude attempt to divert their attention away from the stirring revelations of Rodolfo Noel Lozada Jr. about the National Broadband Network scandal and the conspiracy to prevent him from testifying before the Senate, involving at least one Cabinet official and top police and airport officials. Worse than that, the move has raised suspicion that its ultimate objective is not so much to establish a federal system but to overhaul the Constitution in such a way that Ms Arroyo will be able to continue wielding power beyond 2010, when her term expires. Opposition leaders and other critics have been warning that the President would do anything to hang on to power to avoid being hanged for the many corrupt deals and abuses under her administration.

Curiously, even some of the President's advisers appear unconvinced about the wisdom of making a fresh push for Charter change at this time. Some actually think it could create a bigger problem for the administration. One of them told the Inquirer that people would read it as "simply perpetuation in power" and registered fear that it might prove "suicidal."

But if this faction (correctly) believes that people can easily see through this cynical scheme to preserve the President, those who are behind it apparently think they can fool all the people all of the time. That includes Salceda and Comelec Chairman, director-general of the Philippine Information Agency, whose resources are being harnessed for what is patently a partisan political exercise. There is no law, not even an official policy, supporting federalism or Charter change, and yet the PIA is helping organize forums and consultations in push for initiative. Is it part of the PIA's mandate to undertake information campaigns to promote ideas that have not yet crystallized into policies? But then what is a free millions wanted to shield a President who is being increasingly linked to a scandal involving billion-peso payoffs?

Apparently some administration people and supporters never learn. Every attempt to change the Constitution since the administration of President Fidel V. Ramos was doomed from the moment people smelled some selfish personal agenda behind the drive. Ramos was frustrated in his bid to change the Charter because it was seen as an attempt to prolong his hold on power. More recently, the House of Representatives was forced to abandon Charter change when people opposed a scheme to extend the term of its members. There is no reason even for the most blind administration supporter to believe that the Filipino people will approve another scheme to perpetuate in power a President who has become increasingly unpopular and is getting more deeply embroiled in scandal after scandal.

Salceda, Lizulores and their ilk may have succeeded in diverting public attention from Lozada and the NBN scandal. But just barely and briefly.

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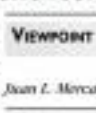
'Beneficent purposes'

VIEWPOINT



Joan L. Mercado

"CONFIDENCE SHOULD TRACE US TO BE most on guard when government's purposes are beneficent," Justice Louis Brandeis once warned, and this caution applies to close links between media, in Congress, whose members zoom high-class flicks will "instill responsibility" in a new press.

There are: (a) House Bill 161 and Senate Bill 1178, legislating the right of reply; and (b) HB 160 banning media from identifying suspects in cases involving "heinous crimes."

Sen. Aquilino Pimentel and Rep. Juan Felipe de Aquino mean their "purposes are beneficent" in bills that'd compel the "rights of reply." Reps. Dangalan Balindong and Mujib Hussman mean likewise; their bill wheels officers or citizen managers who use religious affiliations in reports on criminal suspects.

In RB 161, begun are a 30-day jail term, plus up to P50,000 fine, for those who don't give air "effective access" to rejoin. This echoes Pimentel's bill, recycled into SB 1178 for the new Congress. Balindong and Mujib aren't a year-first time, as provided for in HB 160, would ostensibly deem "communities of discrimination by the perpetrating religion."

These are "beneficent purposes." And the press has no quarrel with them, but no way will it allow government to manacle civic harmonies, by stopping media of constitutionally protected freedoms.

Consider their proposals: A reply must be published or aired, a day after receipt. It must appear in the same page or aired at the same program. Plain. There's more. It must be of the same length or time. And charges shouldn't be dismissed.

Suppose a tv colonizes such article, on page 1, questioned family dynasties, including the Magsaysay, Ebdane, Ong, Geronimo, Representative Singson could invoke on same length, same place reply—even if the editor or author were to decide that a report on an SOS attempt to bushwhack his father, Sen. Eduardo Angara, was more newsworthy. Misleading's Ignacio Bunye could invoke also ABS-CBN's Broadcast 2 the allowed more time to, say, Nielsen can tap than to point by point responses to it.

Indeed, "the Constitution's provision against the clipping of press freedom covers all papers (or stations)," Justice

De Castro is being prudent

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cantiveros

The Makati Business Club (MBC) has called for the resignation of acting Chief Gian Sotto, Sen. Manny Villar and Environment Secretary Angelo Reyes over the ZTE-NBN scandal. But as in the case of many organizations such as the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, the MBC is divided. It appears that MBC chairman emeritus Alberto Lim jumped the call on behalf of a small faction of the MBC, which presumably includes Bill Lee and Ricardo Belmonte. MBC officials Wenen Tachenjian and Antonio Cabangon-Chua have issued statements denying their participation in this call. Fellow business executives have also pointed out that the call was issued without an MBC board resolution, so it's strange that Lim should label his move as an MBC advocacy.

* * *

Lim candidly admitted that the MBC would not call explicitly for the ouster of President Arroyo, which appears to suggest he was just being prudent. It may be recalled that a faction of the MBC and a faction of the Liberal Party demanded the resignation of SONA in July 2005, but she ignored their call. The opposition Liberal Party and the Magsaysay Makabayan bloc moved no signs of true political power, and in 2006 when corruption was laid directly on the doorstep of Malacañang under President Arroyo's family, moreover, the economy is on a roll and most people are busy making their businesses run.

* * *

It was prudent for Vice President Noli de Castro to not call for the resignation of the entire Arroyo administration. He probably realizes that the groups seeking GMA's ouster won't allow him to succeed to the presidency. Those groups have their own agenda and it doesn't include the Vice President who's been very supportive of the administration. I could have difficult it was for Gen Vice President Arroyo to assume the presidency after Estrada was ousted, even though there was no question about her competence and preparation. Especially every time she was to be sworn into office, there were those who rejected her, especially the militants. Things have not changed today and the alliance of militants and opposition having to take over the reins of power won't concentrate a count-tattooed machination. What they want to establish is a civilian military junta, that is, right now all of them insist that they will back up De Castro, but once the country is in total turmoil, they'll be fighting one another for supremacy.

* * *

This is the difference being many citizens the alternative is certain chaos. Those businessmen who are willing to jeopardize the economic progress created by this administration's policies have the same agenda at heart. Today all the forces against GMA appear to have found common cause and their are using Rodolfo "Boy" Locsin Jr.'s nebulous motto (Ladlad) to reunite us. To be sure, a few are genuinely motivated by idealism and outrage over corruption. But many more are after power and the welfare of the people is the least of their concerns.

* * *

Amid all the political turmoil, there's cheerful news. Today, Valentine's Day, former Senate President Aquilino Pimentel and his wife Lydia celebrate their wedding anniversary at their Pimentel Penthouse in Makati. Among the guests will be the brilliant lawyer who was then working for his master's degree took Lydia Barraquio for his wife in St. John's Presbyterian Chapel in Cambridge, Massachusetts, 60 years ago. In our day and age, it seems to be getting more difficult to stay married for even just two decades, so those 60 years of love, loyalty and total devotion to wedded union are truly something for the books. The Galanges are having an open house for their close friends and relatives, with lots of love, music and hearty making. My husband and I, long time admirers of the Galanges couple, join their legion of friends, relatives and admirers in toasting their blissful union.

* * *

Now more than ever, there's need in our global community and our society to build bridges of peace. Happily Manny Pangilinan, under the leadership of its president, Dr. Nina Lim-Yuson, will host the first Asian Children's Museum Conference on Feb. 25-26, 2008 at the Manila Hotel. The theme: "Children's Museum as Bridges of Peace." This international conference will bring together museum activists, educators, panel builders, parents, teachers, volunteers and policymakers, whose concern for children can help create a better future for them. As Nina put it, "Peace can exist in so many levels. It starts families, children can easily learn their differences and appreciate and to that of their family members, and from there they can move on to discovering their roles in the bigger families to which they belong—their communities and their nations."

* * *

The list of prominent speakers, workshop facilitators and moderators include museum headquarters from the Netherlands, Isabel Chong from Singapore's Zoological Gardens, Nelia Gardner of the Intel Museum, and professor Thomas van der Walt of the University of South Africa. Among the Filipino speakers will be John Silva of the National Museum. Dr. Jaime Laya will be the Chairperson of the MCA. The topics to be discussed include the Asian child, children's museums, the philosophy of "hands-on" learning and interactive exhibits. (Lady Intel fee for the hands-on exhibits is $1,000 for the first 100 guests and $500 for foreign participants. Student and group discounts are available. For details: call 523-1707, 522-0798, or 400-7558.

Real love

ONE OF THE FUNDAMENTALS THAT LINK TOGETHER LOVE to the psychology class comes from Robert Sternberg, in his "Triangular Theory of Love." Investing differentiates among the different forms of love by first identifying three basic elements present in intimacy and commitment. Different combination of these elements result in different kinds of love, he says.

Passion, according to Sternberg, refers to "fire and desire," those intense emotions associated especially with the beginning of a relationship. It is as if the basic needs are threatened. In romance, sex demands to be with and connected with the other person.

YOUNG BLOOD

Michael Joseph R. Lukban

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? Write to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph. Visit the newspaper.net/blog and browse.—Ed.

Intimacy, on the other hand, has "a foundation that is deep," which is characterized friendship, but taking says. When someone shares a level of intimacy with another, in this framework, one is not necessarily into physical relationship with the other. Intimacy is derived from shared experiences, especially those that are emotionally intense in kind. Other friends know each other well, and this makes their level of intimacy high. On the other hand, separated couples do not have a deep level of intimacy, and even less so strangers.

Finally, commitment means a person's decision to keep a relationship "in good times and in bad, in sickness and 300 pesos," as it is a friend's wife likes to say. People with a very high degree of commitment stick it out, even when they have the most difficult trials, even when they feel like pulling his hair or smashing the laptop against the wall.

"Romantic love" is characterized by a high degree of intimacy and passion, but a low degree—or even a total absence—of commitment. People experiencing romantic love usually are friends who are driven by intense emotions. Most love songs probably refer to this kind of love. And those who feel this way will each other, "I will love you forever," "I will never leave you," or "I will stand by you forever." Their emotions, however, is unfortunately not accompanied by a real true promise love a supposedly deeds, and more words.

A friend of mine who was in a relationship, once sought my advice. "What do you think is the best thing for me to do?" she asked. "I feel that we are not growing in the relationship anymore. I feel I can no longer express myself. Sometimes I feel it is best for us to go our separate ways."

"How long have you been feeling that way?" I asked her in turn.

"It's already been since times have weeks," she said me.

"Has love long last you been together?"

"There were years ago."

I then asked her, "Have years to love mean more stress compared to three weeks?"

Some people claiming to be "in love" are merely feeling infatuation, which is characterized by a high degree of passion, but no true promise for a commitment. Love is a very true love when of intimacy and commitment. They know the other person superficially, and the amorous words they profess quickly proves to be just that, words.

These feelings are kinds of love, not. And then are many emotions. But perhaps there is no such thing as love that cannot be termed, there are no words of it in the kind of love that people seek and desire, which seems are words to create, because of misconceptions about the nature of love, and so they give up.

One of the simple yet profound analogies I gathered in studying the interpersonal aspect comprises of love. See and I felt elevated to the four legs of a table so representing the different elements of love. Dr. Colleen Shantz used four elements in her framework, using self-mastery as the fourth). If one of the four legs is short, the table becomes unsteady. That is why we must learn to balance the four elements of love, and appropriate stress and focus on when and how to express them. Learning these seven skills, purposes effort. Many times, the real long process can be painful.

I remember a time when I could not stand the fighting, bickering and blaming going on between my dear friend's mom and dad. Every time I'd visit their house, I'd hear them argue. Since's mother has been suffering. From the beginning, through his death and rehabilitation, Anne's dad has been making her mom cry. I thought that it was stupid that they continued to stick together. Instead, I thought, the sad but brave gesture would be to separate, to avoid more hurt or heartbreak. Or to release and embrace, to avoid more hurt or heartbreak. Or to release and embrace, to avoid more hurt or heartbreak. Or to release and embrace

Sighs of love in poetry

THE VALENTINE'S DAY, WE HAVE SOME thoughts to share with the readers. For love is as old as the world we live in, yet as new as a holiday costume we wear. Its forms are many, its media quite varied.

There is the biblical, divine love: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only and begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

But the Bible does not speak only of divine love and no other book has reference to love's obvious manifestations. From the Book of Ruth:

"And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, shall I die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me..."

Other books compete in style and form. Such as Samuel Lover's poet of the 18th century, who writes:

"That's eight times today that you've kissed before,
Then how goes another, says he, to make more."

For there's luck in odd number, says Jove (Odes).

Then, there's love as a self-consuming flame. James Jeffrey is pure says:

"The love of man is as fire,/
To warm, to light, but surely to consume/
And self-consuming die."

From the Book of Judges, we read the story of Samson and Delilah. While the pagan temple rang crumbling, thanks to the love lover of Samson's conving arms, he lay dying:

"At her feet, he bowed; there he fell down dead."

And, finally, the love story of the ages, to Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet," we recall the 20 fated lovers, knowing that he believed was almost dying, drank the poison he held in his cup to be his heart's content. In sight:

"O [asylum] thy wake!
Death than hath snuffs the beauty of thy breath,/
And [unconquered] yet upon thy beauty's enseign yet/
Is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks,/
And death's pale flag, is not advanced there."

Such is the epitaph to "Love."
Love, poetry, anyone?

—LEON L. DELOS SANTOS

LETTERS

A school named after Vilma Santos

A FEW DAYS AGO, I WENT to Batangas and as I passed by Lipa City, I noticed that a school building has been named after Vilma Santos-Recto. Something is wrong here because I know there is an existing law that prohibits naming/renaming public places (streets, school buildings, parks, bridges, etc.) in honor of living persons.

Any comments from the Sangguniang Panglungsod of Lipa City?

—PAUL E. MORTEL
BELA Court, Malamig,
Mandaluyong City 1005

Gov't neglect, root of crimes in Calbayog

I CONCERN TO THE HIGHEST DEgree the assassination last Jan. 14 of Judge Ruben Montilla of the Regional Trial Court of Calbayog City. Similarly I denounce the other unsolved crimes perpetrated by persons with no agenda in mind but to wreak havoc and chaos to our beloved city and province.

During martial law, the province of Samar suffered from the skirmishes between the New People's Army and the Armed Forces of the Philippines, which displaced many individuals and families from their homes, from tapping concessions and the mining industry in the province, which did not contribute to the coffers of the city and the province, but nevertheless, made the island's forests disappear, thanks to the greedy businessmen who had no regard for the environment and were purely motivated by profit, and lastly from the apathy of by politicians and by inhabitants—not because they latter have opted to be ignorant and to look the other way, but because a selected few have willed it so.

The series of murdered crimes in our city is the result of the government's failure to provide for the immediate, medical assistance to the poor and destitute families, have to market woods, which are among the basic needs of humanities. The culture has isolated most of the countries' inhabitants. People in the hinterland have to walk on rugged trails to reach the civilized world, so to speak, just to buy their supply of basic necessities.

Given this situation, children and young people are prone to high-risk and criminal activities as they can lord it over the hinterlands because our three police authority is not present or is lax in enforcing the law.

End to say, our previous and we to residents are confided only during elective time. Meanwhile, the leaders elements make their gain their badge of honor.

—JARIO O. REYES,
Office Manager,
Balangongan Lawyers Cooperative,
L/F Romarosa Bldg., National Road,
Poblacion, Bantilan City

Give more meaning to 'Mendiola 1987'

BECAUSE OF WHAT HAPPENED ON JAN. 22, 1987, Mendiola evokes heart-wrenching images of blood-stained slippers scattered on the pavement and of farmers slumped dead with bullet wounds. It was one of the darkest days of our history, a moment of shame and ignominy we would rather forget and bury in oblivion.

Things may never have been as we may not entirely and clearly remember how all hell broke loose as the farmers desperately tried to break through the Mendiola "blockade" and shots were heard.

Today, it is not so much how the tragic incident happened that we must reflect on and ponder. The instinct that's innate in our humanity affects us to dwell on other concerns, on what would give meaning and substance to the memory of "Mendiola."

We find it hard to believe, much less embrace, the fact that bullets can crush our hopes, devastate our faith and shatter our lives. But let it not end there, for that would make the farmers' death futile. We find it more fitting, more in sync that while the memory of Mendiola may be painful, we emerge from the pain stronger and with lessons learned. It is always said that those who do not learn from the mistakes of the past will be doomed to commit the same mistakes in the future.

The spirit of true reforms continues to live in each of us. Such reforms may not happen overnight but let us contain the fervor and passion by being "the change we want to see in this world." Let us close ranks, unionize and preserve the gains we are around us, and be vigilant against those of us who would like to exploit the vulnerability of our less privileged countrymen to advance their personal interests. Let us denounce those vested groups.

If there is any good that would come from Mendiola, it should be our discerned commitment to peaceful and meaningful change for our country and our children.

—GERARD LAGLA,
Batangas City

Another Sabah?

I WAS ALARMED BY THE NEWS THAT OUR country would not be sending additional troops to the disputed Spratly islands despite the visit made by Taiwan's president there. (Inquirer, 02/05/08)

While Taiwan is making its move to strengthen its claim over the disputed island, our government, shockingly, is not moved. Instead, is busy securing not the Spratlys but the gates of Malacañang. The government deploys 15,000 security forces during President Macapagal-Arroyo's State of the Nation Address, but we only have 60 soldiers guarding the Spratlys.

It is sad to say that our government is risking our claim in the Spratly Islands for granted. How can we show to the other claimants of those disputed islands that we are serious with our claim, if AFP Chief Hermogenes Esperon himself is hesitant to send additional soldiers to defend the islands. While I agree with him that the dispute will be best solved through diplomatic talks, I encourage him to send additional troops to the Spratlys. That number of troops will not last long in case of an attack on the Spratlys, which we pray will not happen.

We must have learned our lessons already when we lost a part of our territory—Sabah. We must not let Spratlys go the way of Sabah.

—GERALD PETER CORTES,
gerald_cortes@yahoo.com

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INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Nickel mining rivalry drags Palawan execs

By Rodelegario Jarata
Puerto Princesa City

A CORPORATE RIVALRY for control over the vast nickel resources of southern Palawan has thrown top local officials into the controversy and exposed glaring weaknesses in the government's policies on mining.

Platinum Group Metals Corp. (PGMC), which had set a multibillion-mining project before, had it blown in 2005, which allowed it to start the nickel application process at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Days, along with scanner technical staff members, were charged with graft before the Ombudsman on Feb. 1.

Reyes and Ambrosio Bejasco, head of the Provincial Mining Regulatory Board (PMRB), secretary, were accused of allowing PGMC to conduct mineral ore-to-be-mined in Quezon town and violating rules governing small-scale mining. Sixteen heads, many of the small-scale projects, which are actually operated and controlled by foreign companies.

PGMC had been penalized by the DENR for exceeding the limit of what it was allowed to haul under its small-scale mining permit, prompting a Manila-based environmental group to say Reyes and other local officials for allegedly connivance with the company.

PGMC has headed under the graft case as part of efforts by its rival companies, Olympic Mining and Development Corp. and Citinickel, to take over its nickel mining operations. "It's all about greed," PGMC chief executive officer Ronnie Arriola told the Inquirer when asked to comment on Reyes' indictment by the Ombudsman.

Arriola claimed that Citinickel was behind the cancellation by the DENR of PGMC's environmental compliance certificate in 2006 on "false" charges of overexploitation and violation of the small-scale mining laws.

Citinickel, he said, wanted to cancel to existing lease contract with PGMC when the latter ceded it to sign up in the area where they had. PGMC and Olympic entered into a lease agreement in 2003 for the former to operate its mining claim in Palawan.

Partiality

When prices of nickel tripled from $5 per pound in 2003 to $15 in 2006, Arriola claimed Olympic began to appeal its agreement with PGMC and set up Citinickel to take over.

Recently, Olympic and Citinickel have been at odds with the provincial government over their mining interests.

In December, the provincial government came down hard on Citinickel for an otherwise petty violation of illegal quarrying of sand and gravel for the construction of its office building in Sitio, it slapped Citinickel with a case of "theft of minerals."

Critics of the provincial government have questioned its "partiality" with certain mining companies, including PGMC, over its role in the alleged violations committed by the company.

"It's a case of crediting one bird per while favoring another," Beth Macdog, advocacy officer of the Palawan NGO Network Inc. (PNKI), said in commenting about the Citinickel case.

For its part, PGMC claimed that the DENR had been influenced by Citinickel to rule against it on the case of cancellation. "There is no final ruling by the DENR that we actually even exercised. If you check the records of our shipment, we never even exercised," Arriola said.

Limits

Records of the PMRB showed that PGMC was within its allowed limit of shipping out 200,000 metric tons-valiant a one-year period. But records obtained from the Philippine Ports Authority showed otherwise—PGMC may have exceeded its quota by at least 50,000 dry metric tons (DMT).

The PPA logs of shipments made by PGMC showed that in 2005, PGMC shipped some 149,0567 of laterite ore, which is 49,1067 beyond its allowed quota for the two small-scale permits it received from Reyes.

Other mining companies backing large-scale mining permits issued by the PMRB have raised upon the proliferation of small-scale permits issued by the PMRB and the governor.

"Mining is too complicated and expensive to be left to small companies with little resources and capacity to conduct responsible mining activities," said George Hapor of Toledo Mining Corp., a large mining company that operates Rio Tuba Nickel Corp. in Quezon, Palawan.

On the part of PGMC, which has large-scale operations in other parts of the country, Arriola admitted that it was Reyes who encouraged the company to go small scale "so that it could start shipping ore right away."

For operating small-scale mining permits issued by the PMRB, mining companies are to use therefore extraction to the national government and local business share in the benefits of revenues. This while they also to pay the whole thing assurances made to protect the environment.

The ore to be mined in PGMC, compared to a ballpark range of 2 to 3 percent of the company's given profit, is all the closer revenue that the province is entitled to.

DENR has also criticized both the DENR and the PMRB for allowing small-scale mining companies to destroy the forests of Palawan through open pit mining while weakly enforcing regulations on the rehabilitation of old mining sites.

Gerald Adversario (right), Barra village chief in Lucena City, helps sardine harvesting. Local records the fabulous nature of Tayabas Bay as coastal children look on.

Former dynamite fishers' den now turtles' haven

By Dello T. Mallari Jr.
Inquirer Lucena

ONCE A MARINE HABITAT ruined by rampant practices of destructive fishing, the Tayabas Bay off Quezon and Batangas provinces is now a safe haven for endangered sea turtles, locally called the "pawikan."

The improvement was plentiful," village chief Elmer Adversario told local journalists. "It was the first time that I witnessed baby turtles racing back to the sea."

The nesting site, which contains some 180 eggs, was accidentally discovered by fishers. "The entire village all scurried to pandemic to the turtle eggs until they were hatched. Unfortunately, some of the eggs got spoiled," Adversario said.

According to Bernal, the presence of the "pawikan" indicates a balanced marine ecosystem. To fishermen, it also means a silenced of fish in the vicinity.

Since the TE launched the "Save the Endangered Species Campaign" in 2003, more than a hundred turtles have been released, Bernal said. "More reports have been reaching us that endangered marine creatures had been found and eventually released by fishermen," she said.

On Dec. 20 last year, a blacktail was freed by fishermen off Macalelon town.

Last week, a four-meter juvenile whale shark (Rhincodon typus), locally known as "butanding," was also rescued after getting trapped in a "baklad" fish pen in Macalelon.

Aaron's that it is endangered, local fishermen freed the whale shark. "To the delight of the coastal residents, the creature came back the next day and was spotted feeding on plankton in the shallow area of the Tayabas Bay," Glenn Paulino, TE coastal and marine program officer, said.

Citing popular belief among the villagers, Bobbo said the appearance of the "butanding" meant a bountiful fish catch. "A good and encouraging sign for 2008," he said.

Five whale sharks were spotted in Oil Depot area and feeding last June.

The Tayabas Bay has two 22-fish sanctuaries which are rich spawning grounds, he said. He attributed the bay's rehabilitation to the partnership initiated by the TE and business owners interested called Puyuno Ahaka eight years ago. Allies is now a nongovernment representing Quezon.

Bobbo, however, lamented that some local officials were undermining efforts to protect and rehabilitate the water body. "It's really depressing, considering the bright prospects offered," he said. We declared to identify the officials.

In your instances, he said, the officials did not give priority to fund the program because the volunteer watchmen were not political allies.

Across the NATION

BULLDOZERS are used to destroy smuggled luxury cars and SUVs during cries in Subic.

400 cars smuggled each week in Cebu since '06

By Tonnee Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—At least 400 luxury cars loaded in some 100 container vans have been arriving every week at the Port of Cebu since Customs Collector Ricardo Belmonte started his stint there in July 2006, an INQUIRER source at the Bureau of Customs claimed on Wednesday.

Told of this allegation, Belmonte said: "That's not possible."

"All selected red shipments go through the Xray. We've also fixed a high number of volunteer cases. And we also coordinated with the [Presidential Anti-Smuggling Group] on that issue," he said.

Undersecretary Antonio Villar Jr., head of the BOC, said Belmonte's group coordinated only after the PSAG uncovered a number of smuggling activities at the Port of Cebu.

According to the source who did not want to be named for risk of losing his job, only eight to 10 vehicles a week are legally released with clearance from the office of the commissioner.

Above 370 cars are declared as replacement parts or 'pyesa.' At least 40 containers with these kinds of declarations belong to a smuggler whose clients include Chinese-Filipino and Korean traders.

The cross-smuggler has been allowed to declare the containers as personal effects since the first quarter of 2007. Personal effects are goods or articles shipped in by individuals, overseas Filipino workers or travellers.

Belmonte called the volumes as "misinformation."

"There are no violations of the [Tariff and Customs Code of the Philippines]. We do not allow that," he said.

The Inquirer source said that "very few are declared as motor vehicles."

Smugglers bring out the cars by registering them with the Land Transportation Office district in Cebu or Toledo City, the source said. Their vehicle registration uses separate SoC-issued certificates of precedence (COPs) for chassis and engines or CPs that are recycled or fake.

Legally, there must be one CP for every motor vehicle. An exception to this is when an importer is an assembler who is registered with the Department of Trade and Industry.

The cunning smuggling in Cebu prompted some smugglers to leave their operations at the Subic Bay Freeport to Zamboanga.

A Supreme Court decision allowing the importation of used cars into Subic but banning the cross in the country had put some brakes on smuggling, it was learned.

Cars released in person-to-person efforts have no records with the customs, said the source.

Smuggled cars get past the customs through the use of informal or formal entry.

An informal entry is a BOC accounting form wherein the importer or broker declares under oath the nature and quantity of goods he is importing.

The Tariff and Customs Code provides that only personal effects and goods valued at P1,000 may be declared using informal entry.

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Lampposts with ₱300,000 price tag each stolen

By Jolene B. Bulambot
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—ASIDE FROM THE 44 DECORATIVE lampposts, 22 streetlights in Lapu-Lapu City installed shortly before the 12th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) summit have been left to thieves.

Roderick Blanco, Visayas Ombudsman, said his graft investigators and the would check reports that many of the streetlights, each costing over P300,000 to Barangay Punta Engaño, Lapu-Lapu City were stolen.

Blanco said he would coordinate with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and the DPWH would indicate measures to prevent further looting of the multimillion peso worth of decorative lamps and streetlights.

The Ombudsman has been conducting an investigation of the alleged overpricing of 1,000 decorative lampposts and 450 streetlights installed in the cities of Cebu, Mandaue and Lapu-Lapu.

The cost of the decorative lamps ranged from P96,000 for those installed in Cebu City to over P300,000 for those in Mandaue and Lapu-Lapu.

The residents in Barangay Punta Engaño told the Inquirer that since the streetlights were installed late November to 2006, these were never lighted.

Some of the streetlights no longer have light bulbs and cable wires were missing.

Blanco also told the Inquirer that, aside from the 44 decorative lamps that were recovered missing on AC Cortes Avenue, there could be more of the decorative lamps that were removed.

NEWSBRIEFS

■ BATANGAS CITY

Town mayor killed, 3 injured in ambush

A lbt BATAS town mayor was killed while three of his companions were injured in an ambush in Barangay Bukal... Mabini town ser by yesterday, police said.

Supt. Renante Garcia, Mabini police chief, said David Pamplona, 53, mayor of Bukal, was killed on the way to the... Jenson Dolino and Arcadio Jonalyn Gonzales and Marilyn Pilgrim were in the... accompanied with M. M. assault rifles, attack.

They were on their way to Mabini town.

Dolino, a third-term mayor, was declared dead at the Daniel Mercado Medical Center in Tanauan City.

Wilson Lalabo
Inquirer Southern Luzon

■ BAGANI CITY

'Condoms' take the sky for different Valentine's

SIX brave sky lanterns shaped like giant white condoms were released into the air on Tuesday evening, part of an educational Valentine's Day preview that reproductive health activists wanted to share with the warrior capital.

Most gawked by burning eyes in their faces kept five of the condoms, afloat in the air.

"One out of five lanterns isn't bad," commented an artist from the Victor Oteyza Community Art Space (Vocas), Gallery of Bienvenido Rafael Lumbok.

The release of the condoms shaped lanterns came amid a campaign by government health agencies to draw public support for use... condoms without stashing head on with the Church.

Vincent Cabreza and Christine Cabico
Inquirer Northern Luzon

■ LUCBAN, LAGUNA

300 student leaders hold alternative summit

A GROUP of over 300 college student leaders in Southern Tagalog convened for a Regional Education Summit at the University of the Philippines Los Baños, saying there was an alternative to the... in Manila which they said seemed to... to the national education committee by Malacañang.

Christine Macabenta, National Union of Students of the Philippines-Southern Tagalog chair, said the Malacañang-sponsored summit was being held in order to address the growing education crisis but that was the most important stakeholder to the education sector—the students.

Nilo Catherine Delgo
Inquirer Southern Luzon

■ MINDUST

Flower growers appeal for cold chain facility

CUT FLOWER growers in the municipality have appealed to existing local officials and the Department of Agriculture (DA) to explore the possibility of establishing a cold chain for roses to prolong the flowers' vase life and enhance their marketability.

Officials of the Manila Cutflowers, Growers, Traders and Traders Association (MCGTTA) said the demand for roses and other flowers had increased in the last few years and new technologies were needed to improve their packaging and distribution.

Cutflower growers can distribute boxes filled with 40 to 45 stems or flowers for roses.

The request for the cold chain came amid the peak of sales for roses in Mindoro. Wednesday. Prices range from P400 to P450 per bundle and are expected to remain, if not to go higher, today, Valentine's Day.

Zaldy Cardo
Inquirer Northern Luzon

Market vendors use citizens' suit vs taxes

A GROUP of public market vendors here is leading efforts to remove more than P7 million in business taxes through a rarely used judicial remedy called "citizens' suit."

The Alaska Open Gym Barangay Vendors Association is the... the action against the town's 1998 revenue code that the group said was enacted without consultation.

The vendors assailed the town's... market stall for using the ordinance to collect enrollment fees for medical services without issuing official receipts.

Zaldy Cardo
Inquirer Northern Luzon

War on mining demolition unites tribe

By Melvin Gascon
Inquirer Northern Luzon

KIBUBU, NUEVA VIZCAYA—About 100 tribal folk, both belonging to the pro- and anti-mining factions of villagers, on Tuesday joined forces to defy the planned demolition of their houses by a foreign mining company that is pushing for a gold-copper mining project in upland Didipio village here.

Villagers belonging to the Didipio Earth Savers Multipurpose Association (Dimasma) and the Didipio United Peoples' Association (Dupa) formed a... and guarded the premises against the entry of an 88-member demolition team.

The team was escorted by some... personnel of the Philippine National Police provincial mobile group.

The villagers assailed the company for allegedly using force, deceit and intimidation in its bid to continue dismantling houses of Dupa members, despite the failure of negotiations on their proposed compensation.

Dimasma is a group of about 300 pro-mining villagers, who, for the past 14 years, have been protesting the company's entry into the area. They have vowed never to give up their land.

Dupa, on the other hand, is a group of about 200 Ifugao tribal folk, mostly miners, who have fought unbridled loss to the area's historic property formerly owned by Peter Cayong and site of the planned open pit for the mining project.

The members used to support the project but organized themselves in 2006 supposedly to guard their rights as landowners in dealing with the company.

OceanaGold is trying to clear the land of houses to make way for its proposed Didipio gold-copper mining project, one of the Arroyo administration's 23 priority mining projects.

The Ifugao firm is invoking its right to access all types of land in Didipio...whether public or private as even... forestland—under the financial technical assistance agreement (FTAA) granted in 1994 to its predecessor company, Climax Mining Limited.

While the 1987 Constitution prohibits foreign individuals and companies from exploiting the country's natural resources, this was allowed by the Mining Act of 1995, under a number of... undeals, including the FTAA.

The Constitution also mandates that citizens shall not lose their land, even for a public purpose, without payment of just compensation in form.

On Tuesday, OceanaGold's wrecking crew demolished four more houses, to add to... 30 houses that were already destroyed since it began the clearing operations in December last year.

Many lot owners, however, complained that their houses were torn down even if they have not reached any final agreement with OceanaGold and have not been fully paid yet.

Raimundo Cruz, OceanaGold vice president for communications and external affairs, said the company stopped negotiating with the Ifugao members because the... the... the...

'BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING'

Rebel soldiers protest spy camera in court

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CEBU PACIFIC AIR.COM
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By Nikko Dizon

LAWYERS OF THE ACCUSED LEADERS OF the February 2006 failed coup have protested video surveillance of soldier-detainees as they appeared in court Wednesday, saying the camera was violating their clients' right to privacy.

The protest occurred when the soldiers were arraigned before Judge Oscar Pimentel of the Makati City Regional Trial Court Branch 148 for their participation in the Feb. 24-26, 2006 mutiny.

Lawyer Rex Fernandez, counsel of Lt. Antonio Trillanes IV, said the soldiers were being subjected to "unnecessary humiliation" by the presence of the camera.

"We object to the presence of these cameras. We don't know if Big Brother is watching," Fernandez told reporters.

Fernandez was referring to George Orwell's novel, "1984," in which Big Brother is the all-seeing dictator who controls the lives of his subjects.

Fernandez said the camera was violating the soldiers' right to privacy because it was recording their every move.

Trillanes, Lt. Sg. Lawrence Kaliman and Navy Capt. Gerardo Gambala were among the 31 soldiers who were arraigned on Wednesday.

Trillanes, Kaliman and Gambala pleaded not guilty to the charges against them.

Fernandez said the soldiers were not informed that they would be subjected to video surveillance.

Court martial presidium Major Gen. Jaime Lee Ryan said the military tribunal did not direct anyone to place a surveillance camera in the courtroom and ordered the military guards to remove the camera.

The guards removed what appeared to be a round dispenser camera the size of a tin from a garland of white flowers placed on the window frame of the clubhouse at Camp Bob where the court martial hearings are being held.

Defense lawyer Trixie Cruz-Angeles said that placing a tagging device is a violation of the Anti-Wiretapping Law and the Human Security Act.

Cruz-Angeles said the defense panel from the start appeared to be a surveillance camera could be picking up the lawyers' conversations and legal strategies that they discuss while the hearing is on break.

All 28 accused led by Trillanes' commander Maj. Gen. Renato Miranda, Army Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim, and Marine Col. Ariel Quevedo attended yesterday's hearing, which they have twice before refused to attend because their custodians wanted to handcuff them.

Except for Lim and Marine Cols. Armando Bisnar and Antonio Custodio, and Navy Capt. Dante Gargalen, all the accused have been transferred from the Army stockade in Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal to the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (ISAFP) compound in Camp Aguinaldo.

As of press time, defense lawyers were engaged in trying to stop the arraignment of the officers, on the ground that some of the accused have not exercised their preliminary challenges, the privilege granted to an accused in a court martial to reject any member of the court without any grounds at any time before arraignment.

Wife, ma of fugitive soldier file writ of amparo vs poster

By Lala B. Salaverria

THE WIFE AND MOTHER OF A DISchanged Marine yesterday petitioned the Supreme Court for a writ of amparo to compel the government to stop using a poster showing the photos of the soldiers who are being blamed in connection with the failed rebellion at the Manila Peninsula Hotel in Makati on Nov. 29.

The filename, refer to the subject of the amparo petition, is Mendalito Lantoria, one of the 10 soldiers in the awaited poster.

The poster describes Lantoria as being "at large." It also states that Lantoria was framed to have been involved not just in the Peninsula rebellion but also in the July 2003 failed coup, also known as the Oakwood mutiny, but he was a group of junior officers calling itself the Magdalo group.

Heading the poster's rostrum list is Capt. Brianon Nicolas who occupied at the height of the rebellion in which Sen. Antonio Trillanes led a group of Magdalo soldiers in the ong takeover of the hotel.

Lantoria has, however, been cleared of criminal liability in the 2003 failed coup and is now facing a rap charges in connection with the Peninsula siege, said lawyer Ernesto Francisco.

Hence, it was unfair for the government to include his photograph on the poster and claim that he is at large, said Francisco.

A P100,000 reward is also being offered by the capture of Lantoria, who was honorably discharged in 2006.

Francisco said there was no telling what those who may wish to get the bounty would do to capture Lantoria, a deceased Marine.

Lantoria's inclusion in the list of wanted soldiers has forced him to go on the run, thus, endangering his and his family's livelihood, the lawyer said.

Since 2005, Lantoria has been working as a security guard and a personal bodyguard of a local government official.

Lantoria has three children and his wife Jennilyn, a Petty Officer 3 in the Navy, is five months pregnant.

Francisco said Lantoria's mother, Mendalita, filed the petition for amparo, asking the high court to stop the government practice of coming out with wanted posters and offering bounties for the capture of people who are not facing any criminal charges.

They said that of the 10 soldiers shown in the poster, only Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim is facing charges.

They said the authorities violated the soldiers' constitutional right to be presumed innocent by coming out with the wanted posters.

Named respondents in the petition were Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Philippine National Police Chief Avelino Razon, Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno, Armed Forces Chief Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. and Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro.

Lantoria was charged with coup d'etat for the 2003 failed coup but his case was dismissed for insufficient evidence.

The military charged him with violation of the Articles of War and detained him for two years. He became honorably discharged when he was demoted upon his release, and sought and was granted an honorable discharge.

DepEd awaits DOJ opinion on cybered

THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IS JUST waiting for the justice department to issue a legal opinion on how to proceed with its ambitious "open and distance learning," or cyber education project.

The government suspended the project last year after opposition legislators denounced it as another anomalous Gloria deal.

But now the project is apparently back on track. "It's just a question of time, embossing cards, phasing, scale and social marketing," said Education Secretary Jesli A. Lapus.

But the DepEd needs the opinion from the Department of Justice because it wants to comply with the rules, said Lapus.

"That is why we still need guidance with the project's supply contract and joint agreement," said Lapus, adding that to date, no contracts and commitments have been negotiated.

The P2b-4 billion high-tech initiative aims to bridge the learning gap between urban and rural schools by using satellite technology to beam televised lectures to students and teachers in far-flung areas and islands.

The project has now dropped the cyber education name and is now called simply open and distance learning.

The government initially considered undertaking the program with the Chinese firm Xinghua Yongfeng Biotech Company (Motto-ha) and Tsinghua University.

Last June, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ordered the presidential task force on education to evaluate and revise the project to a bid fixed it back on track. — Jerry E. Esplanada

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FVR still for GMA; govs go all out

Front page A1

Caloocan Bar Ops and LPP chair Lito Raymund Villaluerna, who hosted the gathering at the Hills Del Rey beside the now-famous Lanudasan Shrine in Barangay Camarin, said the league's members have been backing Mr Arroyo and rejecting calls for her ouster.

Misamis Occidental Gov. Jose Ozamiz and LPP president Leo Dominguez said anti-Arroyo groups should let the proper government agencies take charge of the issues against the Arroyo administration if indeed there were anomalies involved in the NBN-ZTE deal.

Ozamiz said the 45 governors present at the assembly were unanimous in passing the resolution manifesting support for Mr. Arroyo.

The resolution, a copy of which was obtained by the Inquirer, stated in part that "the tyranny of imperial Manila does not reflect the sentiments of our people in the countryside."

'Communal action'

Former President Ramos, however, endorsed the call of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines for the people to take "communal action" to force out the truth behind the NBN-ZTE deal.

"I agree with the CBCP," he said. "In fact, that's what I've always been preaching. We've already proved that to people power. But call it it by right exercise—in the spirit of Edsa, or other reforms in order to sustain a better life for Filipinos for future generations."

Ramos said the communal action could lead to another people power uprising, Ramos, a key player in Edsa 1 of 1986 (which toppled the strongman Ferdinand Marcos), said he did not think so.

He said the key elements that led to Edsa 1 and Edsa 2 of 2001 (which ousted President Joseph Estrada) were absent in the current political turmoil Ramos said people.

Asked what could be the worst of Ms Arroyo's ousting parent despite a series of corruption scandals, Ramos pointed to a postponed lack of consultations from the people and their leaders to bring about change in the country.

"The kind of people's uprising that will result in change, that effected Edsa 1 and II, is not yet at that level," he said. "First is why, maybe, some of our religious leaders are calling for

LET THE TRUTH SHINE THROUGH Students from different colleges and universities in Metro Manila light candles in front of De La Salle University in Taft Avenue on Wednesday night to express support for Rodolfo Lozada Jr.

more communal action."

3 defining moments

Ramos said there were only three defining moments in Philippine history—"the spirit of 1896, the spirit of 1986, and, in between, the spirit of 1942, which is Sumon and the Death March."

"All of them involved sacrifices on the part not just of national leaders but also of the ordinal leaders drawn to the grass roots. That's how we still succeed," he said.

He also said there should first be "self-reward and sacrifice" from both the people and their leaders in order to have a unity of purpose, solidarity in action and teamwork to nation-building.

"That's an old song that I've been preaching, but this is where we need it most—as a time of disunity—and call it nation-building through it. And we should be well ahead in the lead pack," he said.

On the NBN-ZTE controversy, Ramos said his paramount interest was the people and the republic, not a particular person or group.

"I said I support the national interest. What I support is the following through of the investigation. Does proof. Otherwise, it's going to be a big, big bunker of stalemated business," he added.

Premature politics

Bi Caloocan Sen. Ramon Revilla Jr. and LPP spokesperson Rico Echeñique said opposition groups were engaging in premature politics, and he urged them to just wait for 2010, when the Arroyo's term ends.

He said the LPP was urging the Senate to immediately determine the inquiry into the NBN-ZTE deal and let the proper government bodies, such as the Office of the Ombudsman, conduct the investigation.

Responding to the statements, 26 Arroyo assured the governors of her continued commitment to serve and support their programs, and requested that he have a meeting with the LPP and himself be organized.

She said the economic gains achieved by her administration were unprecedented in the past 30 years and were now being felt in the countryside through government projects and programs being implemented with the use of funds generated by her economic reforms and initiatives.

She did not mention anything about the Senate inquiry into the NBN-ZTE issue.

Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya Jr., who accompanied the President together with Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, laughed off claims made by Jun Lozada that billions of pesos in kickbacks were involved in the deal.

Andaya said no such conspiracy was released by the government for the supposed deal as it had been stopped by Ms Arroyo herself.

He said the "whistleblo" being played in the Senate was a matter of government time and money which could have been devoted to more pressing matters.

'Political noise'

National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales expressed confidence that the current "political noise" would not escalate into something that would endanger the presidency.

Gonzales said only some groups in Manila were making noise, "which is not supported by the vast majority of the countryside in the province."

He said the anti-Arroyo group must have misunderstood the GMA's call for "communal action," which, he said, was more of a call for prayer and discernment rather than a call for a drastic measure against the President.

Gonzales stressed that the public should discount Lozada's statements so that they would not be misled by him.

He said the question now must be: "Who is Jun Lozada?"

Gonzales also expressed confidence that the military would not be swayed by the current political developments. He said the men and women in uniform were professionals keeping to their oath to protect the Constitution and abide by duly-constituted authority.

Even certain senators—particularly those with presidential ambitions who are wary of their potential rival, Vice President Noli de Castro, getting an undue advantage by assuming power before 2010—are said to be on the call for the President's resignation.

Sen. Manuel Villar Jr. and his supporters were a "very personal discussion" and that Ms Arroyo had already manifested her intention to serve her full term.

"I guess we'd rather focus on our investigation of the ZTE deal," he said.

Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said he had not called on Ms Arroyo to resign mainly because the opposition had yet to make up its mind on whether Mr Castro was acceptable.

Pimentel said that rather than having Ms Arroyo to quit, the public would be better off and "more at ease" if she were to address all her fears, particularly that, to justify in the Senate, to show that she had nothing to hide.

Although he was at the forefront of calls for Ms Arroyo to step down in 2005 as the height of the "Hello Garci" scandal, Senator Pangilinan is now reluctant to add his voice to the resignation call.

"Pangilinan id always a constitutional option, but it is a reluctant act. We asked her to do so in July 2005, but since no reason appear it and she refused to resign, we just have to live with it," he said.

Valentine's prelude to Black Friday

MILITANT SIBU CIVIL SOCIety groups are gearing for activities with a Valentine's Day theme as a prelude to their participation in tomorrow's "Black Friday" rally in Manila against corruption and for human rights violations.

The umbrella group Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) will hold a series of noise barrages in Quezon City and Manila as a Reddy-to-wear session.

The military in Metro Manila was placed on full red-alert status yesterday in anticipation of the planned street protests on Friday.

"Corruption is an obscene and systemic in this government that they only want to run more focused in the fight against corruption is through a regime change," Bayan secretary general Renato Reyes Jr. said.

Bayan's chapter in Metro Manila continued with its pre-"Black Friday" activities in Manila by hosting students from De La Salle University and neighboring schools in a candle-lighting ceremony at around 6 p.m. to express their support for Lozada.

Another umbrella group, Kilusang, said its multisectoral coalition Lakas ng Bikas will serenade the Quezon City residence of Commander Ilocos Higher Education Chair Rolando Peñ, who is also being implicated in the NBN-ZTE scandal.

The Confederation for Unity, Recognition and Advancement of Government Employees (Courage) to hold a rally at the Quezon Memorial Circle (formerly Mendiola) Bridge near Malacañang to proclaim that "love is definitely lost between the rank-and-file employees and the Arroyo government."

Salonga: Enough evidence to file raps vs Mike A, Abalos, Neri

Front page A1

Salonga, who wrote a book on rules of evidence, said citizens' watchdog groups Bantayan, Ramon Magsaysay and Bantayog ng mga Bayani would soon file a complaint in the Office of the Ombudsman against Mike Arroyo, Elias Ayson, Lourdes Sandoval, Abalos, Neri and even Environment Secretary Lito Atienza.

Bantayan and the two other groups are calling on Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo to initiate himself from his office's investigation of the ZTE-NBN deal because of his alleged partiality to Mrs Arroyo and Abalos.

Salonga said the groups, whose members include some of the country's eminent lawyers, were ready to provide Senate witness Rodolfo Noel Lozada Jr. with free legal assistance if he needed any.

Lozada, or "Jun" de Venecia III, who blew the whistle on the deal, and now Senate witness Rodolfo Noel Lozada Jr. have linked the Pasig. dent's husband to the deal and accused Abalos of bribering it in exchange for his commissions.

Greed

It was first when he was director general of the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) who directed Lozada when he tapped as consultant in the NBN project to "moderate the greed" of Abalos et al.

Salonga, a key opponent of Joseph Estrada before he resigned as CEO of Philippine Forest Corp., directed Lozada to fly to Hong Kong to prevent him from testifying in the Senate on the NBN deal.

It was also Atienza who had a hand in having Lozada picked up at the airport by police officers upon his arrival from Hong Kong in an alleged attempt to keep him from testifying in the Senate.

"According to the transcripts [of Lozada's testimony], former Commission on Elections Chair Abalos is heavily involved ... The Neri Confession is also involved," Salonga said at a news conference at the Elizabeth House in Mandaluyong City.

"To the case of the President ... she was the one who served in Cabinet [to witness the signing of the deal] where the amount was not guaranteed to government but with a private company," he said.

ZTE Corp. is a state-owned telecommunications firm listed on the Shenzen and Hong Kong stock exchanges.

"She went to Boao, China, [on April 21, 2007] and she was ... directly involved in economic matters of foreign corporations," Salonga said.

Asked if the groups affiliated with him would file an impeachment complaint against Ms Arroyo, Salonga said: "We were due to the congressmen."

Impeachment

"Ours is not the proper time," Salonga said, referring to the one-year ban on filing impeachment complaints against the same impeachable official. The last impeachment complaint against the President was filed last October, which was dismissed by the House committee on the Elizabeth House.

Any de Venecia was the first to testify in the Senate about the alleged corruption in the NBN-ZTE deal, implicating Jose Pidal Abalos Jr. and the President's husband, Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo. His father, the Pangasinan representative, was ousted last month from the speakership by allies of the President.

De Venecia branded the allegations of Rodolfo "Jun" Lozada Jr., the technical consultant of their businessmate Planning Secretary Romulo Neri, supposedly to prevent him from testifying at the Senate.

Lozada was able to make it to the Senate, testifying that Abalos wanted to get at least a $130 million commission from the project and that Neri had instructed him to "moderate their greed."

"She cannot stop corruption in her family, and also corruption in the different agencies of the government, which she is responsible for, and also all the lies and propaganda that emanate from Malacañang," De Venecia said.

He said Ms Arroyo could stop because of corruption in her personal and official family, including the $329-million NBN project awarded to China's ZTE Corp

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Aplus METRO

RODRIGUEZ town Mayor Pedro Cuerpo shows media a copy of the resolution banning garbage from Metro Manila in his town.

Rodriguez town closes down both dumps to Metro waste

Cuerpo: We want our town to be quiet and peaceful again

By Marlon Ramos and Kristine L. Alave

BAD NEWS FOR RESIDENTS OF METRO MANILA.

Two days after implementing the "pay as you discharge" scheme for garbage trucks, the municipal council of Rodriguez, Rizal, yesterday approved a resolution imposing a ban on the dumping of garbage from Metro Manila in its sanitary landfills.

Rodriguez Mayor Pedro Cuerpo said the decision was their way of ending the "fruitless and bitter word war and legal and extra-legal maneuverings" between his town and the Rizal provincial government. The two parties have been fighting over who has control over the 14-hectare and 10-hectare dumps in the town quality.

At the same time, Cuerpo quickly asserted that the decision of the 13-member council was not special to get back at Rizal Gov. Casimiro "Ito" Ynares III and officials of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority who, he claimed, were behind his 60-day suspension.

"The worst of Rodriguez is just tired of this landfill issue. We want our town to be quiet and peaceful again," he told the business in a press conference held in Quezon City.

The Rizal provincial board suspended Cuerpo for 60 days, starting the other day, for a municipal ordinance which imposed a "development reaction fee" on landfill users according to the board. The municipal government had no authority to issue the ordinance.

Vice mayor sworn in

At 4 p.m. yesterday, Ynares swore in Independent Vice Mayor Jessie Cruz as acting mayor after the Rizal Department of the Department of the Interior and local Government failed to serve the suspension order on Cuerpo.

Abel Benitez, DILG Rizal director, said they posted the order on the door of the mayor's office and at the gates of the municipal hall after Cuerpo's security refused to accept it.

The three-page resolution, which took effect immediately, was unanimously approved by the municipal council in a special session.

It is expected to affect the cities of Pasig, Taguig and Makati and the town of Pateros in Metro Manila, and the town of Cainta and San Mateo in Rizal province.

Except for Cruz, all the members of the municipal council showed up at Cuerpo's news conference.

"This is not political vendetta. There's nothing politicized with this resolution. We just want to save our town from the possible irreversible effects of the landfills on our environment," said Councilor Alberto Carasco who authored the municipal resolution.

Ynares, meanwhile, belittled the resolution, saying it is not a legal basis to banishade the landfills from garbage haulers. "It's just a resolution. It's not an ordinance," he said.

Public hearing

He added that it should pass a public hearing and three council readings before becoming a local law.

MMDA legal counsel Emmanuel de Castro said the agency is prepared to go to court to fight for its right to use the sanitary landfill in Rodriguez, particularly the 10-ha dump which was originally for the use of Rizal province.

He said garbage trucks from Metro Manila were already being allowed to dispose of their cargo to the facility beginning Saturday night, and that he had received no report they were being blocked yesterday.

According to Cuerpo, by closing the landfill to Metro Manila users, the municipal government stands to lose more than P145 million in revenues a year.

Since 2001, the municipal government has been collecting P600 from each truck which uses its garbage facility. Last year, the hauling and tipping fees were raised to about P800 to P1,000 per truck.

On Monday, Cuerpo announced the implementation of the "pay as you discharge" policy which required each garbage truck to pay the fees on the spot instead of assessing payment through the MMDA.

With a report from DJ Yap

St. Luke's Medical Center

Chef Gene Gonzalez

In celebration of the month of HEARTS, St. Luke's Medical Center is proud to announce our GUEST CHEF for the week from February 11 to 17...

Chef Gene Gonzalez

Chef Gene is the culinary guru behind the successful Cafe Hidalgo and is the Chairman of the Center for Asian Culinary Studies.

He has prepared a weeklong heart healthy lunch menu which will feature Asian cuisine from his book titled "Going East."

Metro bus group offers to cut fare

By Riza T. Olchondra

BUS OPERATORS PLYING ROUTES IN Metro Manila have offered to reduce the minimum fare in regular buses as their way of helping "underprivileged passengers."

In a petition submitted to the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board, the Metro Manila Bus Operators proposed that the present minimum fare of P8 being charged by their vans should be reduced to P6, a cut of 30 percent.

For his part, LTFRB Chair Thompson Lantion said that although he welcome the proposal, the agency would still have to conduct a hearing on the proposed fare reduction.

The MMBO members are Saronson Inc., HST Inc., Severino Station, Galvan Bus Inc., San Jose Trans, Del Monte City Trans Inc., Mayvalco Trans, Philtic Express Liner Trans, Inc., Jet Liner Inc., Bar Transit, Precious Grace Transit and Kalbo Del Transit Corp.

In their petition, the bus operators said they were confident of retaining a reasonable return on investment because of discounts on diesel and other forms of government support.

They added that they made the proposal out of sensitivity to the plight of their passengers "who are mostly underprivileged, particularly those residing in the northern and southern parts of Metro Manila (Valenzuela, Caloocan, Bagong Silang, Tanglin, San Jose del Monte, Sapang Palay, Bocaue, etc.)."

DID YOU KNOW

TODAY, Feb. 14, is the third anniversary of the Valentine's Day bombings which killed eight persons and injured about 100 others. Four of the fatalities were in Makati City, where a passenger bus was bombed. Also bombed were a mall in General Santos City and a bus terminal in Davao.

In October 2005, a Makati court found two Filipinos and an Indonesian guilty in a number of bombings. The three were sentenced to death. — **Cynthia Balana, Inquirer Research**

CHRYSLER

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CHRYSLER MAKATI
CHRYSLER GREENHILLS

Firemen blame lack of water for 5-hour Parañaque fire

By Julie M. Aurelio

THE ABSENCE OF FIRE HYdrants prevented firefighters the other day from immediately putting out a blaze which broke out in a supermarket storage room on Sucat Road, Parañaque City.

It took more than five hours for the firemen to put out the blaze after they ran out of water.

"There are no available fire hydrants here in the Sucat Road area. The nearest one would be in Baclaran and that's too far," said Supt. Leonardo Perez, the city fire marshall.

The fire broke out at 4:06 p.m. Tuesday on the first floor of the Sucat Foodmart in Barangay San Isidro Labrador by the YP Compound, where the storage room was located.

Outside the five-story building, there were no visible fire hydrants, only smoke coming out of the building's exits.

Firemen were forced to bore holes in the walls to let the smoke out and allow them to find the source of the fire.

Arson investigators are looking into faulty electrical wiring as the cause of the fire. Perez estimated the damage at about P5 million.

Neighboring structures were not affected as the firemen were able to contain the flames inside the warehouse.

The smoke kept on coming, initially, it was hard for us to put out the fire. So we made six holes in the walls and the ceiling for the smoke to come out," said Supt. Joella Mendoza, fire marshall for the southern part of Metro Manila.

At least 30 to 40 fire trucks from all over the metropolis responded to the blaze, which created heavy traffic on Sucat Road for a few hours on Tuesday evening.

There were no civilians injured during the blaze but Mendoza cautioned her men when the fire was finally out. Still crawls inside the burning building.

Mendoza was later taken to the Ospital ng Makati for treatment.

METROBRIEFS

Man jumps from bridge

A Mindanao-based man after he jumped from a bridge in Taytay, Rizal on City, police said.

Identified as Sharon Encarnacion, 25, of Iligan City, he was hit by two taxicabs when he jumped from the Taytay-Tanay Bridge to Barangay Muntin Bato around 1 a.m. According to a report from the Taytay City Police District, the motorist crossed, across when members of the Quezon City Reserve Teams arrived at the area. The rescued team's driver, Danilo Joseph Encarnacion to the Quezon City General Hospital. A witness, Maria Cagampang, told police investigators that the man was talking to himself before he jumped from the Muntin Bato bridge. The report said Encarnacion was apparently suffering from mental illness.

Marlon Ramos

Man caught stealing cash donations

POLICE arrested a person man accused of stealing a container containing donations for victims of typhoon in a barangay hall in Manila this other day. Edcel Reyes, 37, of Tondo, Distrito, Pasay City, was arrested after he was caught with the container the counter of the Kamuning Fire Division branch on Tolli Avenue at 12:40 p.m. Tuesday, investigators NPCO Senior Inspector Edcel Reyes, pretending to be a customer, took the container from Rafael Rodriguez who was then on duty at the counter when he was caught. Rodriguez is the son of Rafael Rodriguez who has been on duty at the counter when he was caught. Rodriguez is the son of Rafael Rodriguez who has been on duty at the counter when he was caught.

Allison W. Lopez

CEU marks centennial

CENTRAL Escolar University celebrated its 100th founding anniversary with the CEU Centennial Grand Revival featuring on the theme "Rotters, Dining, Sentiment in Bath Tender" to be held at the Cultural Center of the Philippines on Feb. 17, at 8 p.m., with a multiple-course menu of 5 p.m.

The Cultural Revival presents 10 iconic artists have been presented by CEU during its 100 years of existence. These are the composer, the architect, and the opera.

OPENS FEBRUARY 20

THE DESPERATE HOUSEWIFE IS NOW A DESPERATE GHOST IN THE YEAR'S MOST HILARIOUS ROMANTIC COMEDY

EVA LONGORIA PARKER

PAUL RUDD · LANCE BELL · JASON BIGGS

Submit relocation plans, SC tells oil firms

By Leila B. Salaverria, Abigail L. Ho and Allison W. Lopez

THE SUPREME COURT YESTERDAY upheld its earlier decision ordering the so-called "Big Three" oil companies, Petron Corp., Pilipinas Shell and Chevron Philippines (formerly, Caltex), to move out of the Pandacan oil depot in Manila.

The high tribunal's resolution penned by Justice Renato Corona ordered the Jan. 21 incident in which an oil tanker exploded in the middle of a busy street in Manila and caused "deaths, extensive damage and a frightening conflagration." A massive vehicle fire with one injured after their car was engulfed in flames.

"Based on any satisfying about what will happen if it is the estimated 40 to 22.5 million liters of petroleum products in the terminal complex which Mayon up?" the court said.

At the same time, it ordered the oil companies to submit a comprehensive plan and relocation schedule to a local court within a nonextendible period of 90 days.

High stakes

In a statement, Petron said it would release all legal remedies given "the stakes involved" in the matter.

"At present, there are no viable relocation sites that have the adequate infrastructure, such as access roads—in place, accessibility to deep waters and are close enough to Metro Manila to ensure timely delivery of products," Petron public affairs manager Virginia Barcelon said.

Mark Quinlad, Chevron Philippines' manager for policy, government and public affairs, said the Pandacan oil depot was the "energy lifeline" of the metropolis, considering its strategic location and the amount of fuels being stored there.

"The MOA and other areas in greater Luzon are super-lean markets that need to be served reliably and efficiently in a safe and secure manner. At this time, Pandacan offers the best location and the most strategic advantage to meet our standards for efficient, safe and reliable operations," he said.

Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim, meanwhile, said he would "follow to the letter" the court decision.

"We look forward to the implementation of the decision, but the ball is now in the hands of the oil firms operators to inform their staff members," he added.

50 percent of RP's fuel

According to industry data, 50 percent of the country's total fuel requirements go through the Pandacan depot which supplies some 1,000 retail stations in Regions 1 to 6, close to 300 of which are in Metro Manila.

On March 7 last year, the high court ordered their Manila Mayor Lito Atienza to implement City Ordinance 8027 which reclassified the oil depot's location into a commercial zone from an industrial zone.

The ordinance, which took effect on April 16, 2005, also directed the oil firms to stop their operations within six months and move out of the depot.

The ordinance, however, was not implemented because Atienza and the Department of Energy signed a memorandum of agreement with the oil companies which allowed them to scale down operations and install safety measures.

The delay in the relocation of the oil depot's operations prompted concerned groups and Manila residents to take the matter to the high tribunal.

KISS PEST Congressman during a pre-Valentine event at the NBC Tent in Taguig City. At least 100 couples kissed simultaneously as part of a yearly event called "Lovapalooza," that started in 2004.

First Couple: Good cop, bad cop

ON TARGET

ROMMEL ZAMORA

MORE SHRILLNESS AT THE SENATE investigation of the ZTE-NBN scandal, starring Jun Lozada as witness.

Sen. Aquilino Pimentel apparently did a disservice to witness on the Treasury Senate director general and now Commission on Higher Education Chair Romeo Sen.

He asked Lozada a question that he refused to answer, saying it was "too personal."

Pimentel's question: "Is your relationship with Romy Neri as close as his relationship with Ven Iglesias and Roger Rebollo?"

Why did Lozada see the question was too personal?

When President Gloria Red asked Neri as Neda chief to approve the ZTE-NBN contract, he said he could not, "as a matter of principle."

GMA's cheap retort: "Why, is Jun Lozada also a matter of principle?"

Neri told friends his reply to the President was, "Ma'am, that's too personal."

Hmmmmm!

Lozada refuses to drag Neri into the $329-million scandal.

Pero doon sana ang tingin ko Lozada. Here's what I found out. Up to this point, he has considered his close friend Neri from being linked to graft and corruption.

Lozada experienced the "epiphany" when he was overwhelmed by the kindness that greeted while Executive Chair Romeo Lozada already was allegedly setting for the ZTE-NBN project.

A 20-percent kickback for the project cost would have been "permissible," Lozada said, but Abalos repeatedly asked for much, much more.

When he was asked if President Gloria was part of the "greed" that Neri asked him to "modernize" in the ZTE-NBN completed project, Lozada said, "Can I give you a pregnant smile?"

Close friends of the First Couple I've talked with say the much like play the good cop, and he the bad cop.

The same friends of the First Couple told me that in their younger days, Gloria oftentimes got Mike into fights when they were in parties.

She would tell Mike that another man made advances or propositioned her, even if the guy did not.

Mike, angered by his wife's ranting, would aggressively confront the guys and basically wreak havoc.

One guy who was confronted reportedly told Mike, "Mike, is your partner that pretty?"

The Senate plans to investigate the allegedly grossly overpriced Health Fund project.

Some names, like those of former Senator Jose de Venecia, might surface, according to my sources.

Ironically, Sr. Senator has called for a "moral reckoning" following the ouster of Speaker.

Lozada's most damaging testimony against the President was his statement that she would have diverted the funds for the housing of soldiers and police in the provinces for the ZTE-NBN loan had the project not been scrapped.

She gave millions of pesos to military and police generals from her intelligence funds to buy their loyalty.

But she would deny the Fort soldier and Fort policeman their housing.

Without the ordinary soldiers and policemen to command, the generals are nothing.

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OPENS FEBRUARY 20

THE WORLD IS POSSESSED BY THE EVIL OF MEN

The WORLD

Elinor Lenaerts B. Gacoo

US Senate passes controversial wiretapping bill

WASHINGTON—THE SENATE on Tuesday gave in to pressure from President George W. Bush's administration and passed a controversial measure authorizing sweeping approaches to tap foreign telephone calls and e-mails in the US "war on terror."

By a vote of 68 to 29, the Senate passed the bill, which now moves to the House of Representatives and faces stiff opposition from some Democrats.

After heated debate, the Senate defeated the measure offering blanket immunity to telecommunications companies for potential violations of US laws requiring warrants to spy on US citizens—a modest move lawmakers in the House have endorsed.

Bush described the Senate move as a "strong, bipartisan vote in support of legislation that will ensure that our intelligence professionals continue to have the critical tools they need to protect the nation."

The bill "provides a long-term foundation for our intelligence community to monitor the communications of foreign terrorists in ways that are timely and effective and that also protect the liberties of Americans," he said in a statement.

The White House late Tuesday renewed its call that Democratic House leaders bring their bill in line with the one passed in the Senate.

The House version, which Bush has threatened to veto, offers no protection for the telecommunications industry and has more restrictions on the government's power.

White House spokesperson Dana Perino called late Tuesday for a swift House vote on the less site-backed measure.

"The Senate passed a strong, bipartisan bill, and the intelligence community needs this good, long-term legislation, not a patchwork of extensions," she said.

"The House is risking national security by delaying action. It's increasingly clear Congress will not act until it has to, and renewed reassurance will only lead to a dare. The President will not sign another extension."

The Bush administration insists that the controversial surveillance program is necessary to monitor communications between suspected terrorists overseas and extremists inside the United States.

Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney have said it was "urgent" to renew and update the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) "immediately and permanently" before a key monthly action from last year expired this month. AFP

THE DISCOVERY of a remarkably well-preserved fossil representing the most primitive ape species known to date and an ensuing new family of bats (bottom-right) that (these animals evolved the ability to fly before they could echolocate, or use high-pitched sounds to find the location of objects by the sounds reflected from them) AP

ASSASSINATION TRY

E. Timor readies arrest warrants vs 18 suspects

DILI—EAST TIMOR WAS TO ISSUE ARREST warrants for 18 suspects on Wednesday after assassination attempts on the prime minister and President José Ramos-Horta, who underwent further surgery on multiple gunshot wounds.

The prosecutor-general said the number of suspects may grow after Monday's dramatic twin gun attacks on the president's residence and a motorcade carrying Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão.

"On this preliminary list there are 18 names and this number may still grow, depending on the progress of the case," Longuinhos Monteiro told reporters.

"The names cannot be divulged before the court permits it," he added.

Assailants presumed to be renegade soldiers melted into the hills after the attacks on the two shoot-outs, which left fugitive military leader Alfredo Reinado dead and foiled the young nation from fresh crisis.

Roadblocks were set up around Dili as a state of emergency was declared and Australian troop reinforcements arrived to head off a repeat of several more months of violence.

The UN mission here said on Tuesday that two cars carrying 18 rebels had arrived at Ramos-Horta's home as dawn on Monday.

It was unclear how many men were involved in the attack on Gusmão, a former guerrilla fighter against Indonesian occupation still widely revered in East Timor as an independence hero.

The UN deputy police commissioner in East Timor, Hermanprit Singh, earlier told AFP that the investigation into the assaults was well under way and police wanted to ensure an "airtight" case.

"We are covering all aspects of an investigation, including collecting evidence, sifting through it, identifying suspects, pushing for the arrest warrants to be issued, as courses," he said.

"This is a long-drawn process as the case should be airtight."

Meanwhile Ramos-Horta remained in serious but stable condition in a hospital in Darwin, northern Australia, after a third operation on bullet wounds to his chest and back.

A hospital spokesperson said doctors were "pleased" at the 58-year-old Nobel peace laureate's progress since being airlifted from Dili in an induced coma.

About 350 Australian soldiers and police arrived in East Timor on Tuesday at Gusmão's request, including a frigate with a company of 150 personnel, tasked with "bolstering security on the ground" along with their colleagues.

International peacekeepers as well as 225 police were originally deployed to the former Portuguese colony after widespread unrest two years ago that pitted factions of the military and police against each other.

Thirty-seven people were killed in the violence that also forced more than 150,000 people, or almost 15 percent of the population, to flee their homes. Most remain in camps, still concerned about fragile security. AFP

Flying deaf: Million-year-old bat shows flight came first

PARIS—A NEARLY PERFECT bat fossil unveiled on Wednesday, the oldest ever found, has set off a long-simmering evolutionary debate: first came flight, and only then did bats develop sonar to track and trap their prey.

Most experts had thought it was the other way around, according to the study, published in the British journal Nature.

Echolocation—the ability to emit high-pitched squeaks and hear the echo bouncing off flying insects as small as a mosquito—was assumed to be what made it feel what.

There are over 1,000 species of bats in the world today, and all of them can ping the air with sound waves.

But some, especially larger fruit bats, depend on their sense of smell and sight to find food, showing that the winged mammals could survive without their seemingly capacity to gauge the location, direction and speed of flying creatures in the dark.

Dog-size oil limestone deposits in the state of Wyoming in the western United States in 2003, the new find is to a category all by itself, giving rise to a new genus and family.

Its large claws, primitive wings, broad tail and especially its underdeveloped cochlea—the part of the inner ear that makes echolocation possible—all set it apart from existing species.

It is also radically different from another bat found in Switzerland in 1960, icaronycteris index, that lived during the same Early Eocene period.

Most experts had favored an "echolocation first" theory because this earlier find, also from the Green River geological formation in Wyoming, was so close in morphology to modern species.

A team of researchers led by Nancy Simmons of the American Museum of Natural History baptized their find Onychonycteris finneyi, based on the Latin name for "clawed bat," in honor of its unique prehensile feet.

They were amazed to find that despite its underdeveloped hearing, O. finneyi apparently did not have a sonar for fruit.

"In teeth seem to show that it was an insect-eater," said Kevin Seymour, one of the authors and a paleontologist at the Royal Ontario Museum in Canada. "And if it wasn't echolocating then it had to be using other methods to find food," he told AFP. AFP

Australia says sorry to Aborigines

RUDD

CANBERRA—AUSTRALIA APOLOGIZED on Wednesday for the historic mistreatment of Aborigines, moving many Aborigines to tears and prompting cheers from huge crowds gathered in cities across the nation.

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd told parliament that past policies of assimilation, under which Aboriginal children were taken from their families to be brought up in white households, were a stain on the nation's soul.

"Today, the parliament has come together to right a grave wrong," Rudd said.

"We apologize for the laws and policies of successive parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians."

The parliamentary apology comes 11 years after a major report into past assimilation policies found between one in three and one in 10 Aboriginal children had been taken from their families between 1910 and 1970.

The report urged a national apology to those affected, known as the Stolen Generations, but the then conservative government under Prime Minister John Howard rejected the finding and offered only a statement of regret.

Rudd made the apology the first item of parliamentary business for centre-left Labor, which won power in November last year, ending almost 12 years of conservative rule.

"It makes the indigenous community feel, for the first time in a real long time, really feel part of Australia, that it's embraced by the Australian nation," Lindon Coulthard, elder Mark Ella Bakee told Reuters.

"It's about us coming together as a country, acknowledging our past and moving on, accepting each other as brothers and sisters of this nation," he said.

About 100 members of the Stolen Generations were in parliament to hear the government apologize, some wiping away tears as Rudd spoke, while thousands more gathered from dawn on the lawns outside to watch him speak on giant television screens.

Others gathered at city squares, town halls and schools around the country to watch the speech, which Australians expect to open a new era of reconciliation between indigenous and white Australians.

In Sydney's inner-city suburb of Redfern, home to a large Aboriginal community, hundreds stood in heavy rain and cheered each of the times Rudd said "sorry." "Sorry heals the heart, and it goes deep," said Redfern Aboriginal activist Rhonda Dixon-Grovenor. Reuters

WORLDBRIEFS

Pakistan test-fires missile

ISLAMABAD—Pakistan's military said on Wednesday it has successfully test-fired a short-range missile capable of carrying a nuclear device. The Army's Strategic Missile Group launched the Ghaznavi missile, which has a range of 290 kilometers, from an undisclosed location, a military statement said. Prime Minister Mohammadmiar Soomro, top Army officials and scientists witnessed the test, it said. AP

US envoy apology

TOKYO—The US ambassador to Japan offered a personal apology on Wednesday over a US Marine's alleged rape of a young woman in Okinawa amid warnings that the incident will damage the countries' alliance. US Ambassador Thomas Schieffer flew to the southern island and bowed in front of the governor at the start of a meeting. Schieffer had earlier called the rape allegations "shameful" and promised to help the investigation. Staff Sgt. Tyrone Luther Hadnott, 38, was arrested on Monday over allegations that he raped a 14-year-old girl in his car on the island, which is home to thousands of US troops. AP

Sri Lanka fighting

COLOMBO—Fighting continued to rage between Sri Lankan government forces and Tamil Tiger rebels in the north of the island on Wednesday, with the military reporting more than 100 rebels killed. The latest fatalities, the Sri Lankan military said, two of its soldiers on a routine patrol in the Vavuniya district in the north of the country, close to the de facto state controlled by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). But the military also said 30 Tamil Tigers died in separate clashes on Tuesday. AP

Malaysia to hold elections

PUTRAJAYA—Malaysia's prime minister dissolved Parliament on Wednesday to pave the way for early general elections that will test his declining popularity following complaints about inflation, crime and ethnic tensions. Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi told reporters that Malaysia's constitutional monarch approved the election plan and that the Election Commission would set a date. Elections must be conducted within 60 days after Parliament is dissolved, but typically they are held sooner. AP

Gas dispute resolved

MOSCOW—Russia and Ukraine on Tuesday reached a deal to resolve a row over gas debt in which energy giant Gazprom had threatened to cut supplies to Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin said. AFP

Danish police foil attack on Muhammad cartoonist

COPENHAGEN—DANISH police arrested three people on Tuesday suspected of plotting to kill one of the cartoonists who sparked angry protests from Muslims worldwide in 2006 by drawing caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad.

Operations "conducted a police operation at 4:30 a.m. in the northern region, in cooperation with local police, to prevent a murder linked to terrorism," said Jakob Scharf, head of Denmark's intelligence agency PET.

The raid was carried out "after lengthy surveillance," he said, but added that PET did not have enough evidence to hold the suspects.

The agency "didn't want to take any unnecessary risks" and chose to "intervene at a very early phase to put an end to those plans to carry out the murders," he explained in a statement.

PET said the three suspects were a Dane of Moroccan origin and two Swedish nationals. The Dane was due to be released after questioning and the Swedes arrested a license to national security, were to be expelled from the country.

The intelligence agency did not disclose their identities.

Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen said he was "deeply concerned by these suspicions of a very serious crime, which underscores only demonstrates that there are extremist groups in Denmark that do not recognize or respect the basic principles of society." "In Denmark, we are free not only to think and speak as we please, but also to draw what we want. And the government will protect this freedom of expression," he stressed.

The online edition of Denmark newspaper Jyllands-Posten, which published the cartoons in its print edition in September 2005, identified the cartoonist who was targeted by the plot as Kurt Westergaard.

Westergaard was one of 12 cartoonists who drew caricatures for the newspaper. He was considered the most controversial, featuring the prophet's head with a turban that looked like a bomb with a lit fuse.

Westergaard, 73, and his wife Grete have been provided with heavy police protection for the past few months and were moved frequently to secret locations after they received death threats, the newspaper said.

Jyllands-Posten, whose headquarters are in Aarhus in western Denmark, said the threats were concrete.

The Danish Muslim Association was considered offensive by many Muslims and their publication sparked violent protests in a number of Muslim countries in January and February 2006. AFP

WESTERGAARD AP

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AT PORTOFINO

Defense key in title duel between Giants, Realtors

Officiating may play crucial role, says Gregorio

By Marvin B. Castillo

AFTER GOING THROUGH THE PLEASANTRIES YESTERDAY, Purefoods and Sta. Lucia now gird for battle in tomorrow's Game 1 of the Smart PBA Philippine Cup title series, which promises to be bruising more than anything before it.

"All we're asking for is consistency." Purefoods coach Ryan Gregorio said, when asked whether he thought that the way Sta. Lucia plays defense bordered on the implementation of the rules.

"We can play the way they play (defense)," the youthful coach, seeking his second all-Filipino crown and third championship overall, said. "But still as how the rules (are made) will be implemented and we will play by it."

Gregorio will be up against a coach calling the shots in a title series for the first time in his career.

And Jerry Fernandez, a hard-nosed guard during his playing years, has transformed the Realtors basically in his mirror image on the defensive end.

"Whichever team defends better will win this series," said Fernandez, who was joined by his entire squad in a pre-Finals press conference yesterday in Manila. "This team (Sta. Lucia) thrives on defense.

"If we are to win this series, it will be because of our effort on the defensive end."

Fernandez, who will be guessing for his first title as a player and coach, said the Realtors rested up topping the defensive averages after the semifinals.

But he suspected to have his hands full against Gregorio, whose leader Jayjay Guiao won the close runners-up in the same department.

Both squads were present during the briefing, and players and coaches from both camps exchanged hugs and wished each other luck before they plunge into war starting at 7:20 p.m. tomorrow at the Big Dome in Cubao.

Sta. Lucia allowed an average of 89.68 points per game after the semifinals, while the Giants gave up 91.48 points.

The two dominated the eliminations round then ousted two formidable teams in the Final Four.

While both teams use play defense, their respective offensive armadas are as formidable as any teams in the tournament.

Focus on the Purefoods offense will be on James Yap and Kerby Raymundo, the Gilas' 1-2 punch who have started in each of their 23 games.

But Gregorio came up with a naughty grin when asked if he has other players who could take up the slack when his two stars don't perform well.

Sta. Lucia has never had a team as well-rounded as this one, and skipper Dennis Espino pointed this out when some one asked what the true weapon of the Realtors would be in these Finals.

"Our combination has clicked for the tournament," Espino said a packed area in Pilipinas. "The mix of the veterans and the young ones has become so much balanced that we have been able to get to where we are now."

Gregorio feels that if there is one player who will make the difference for the Realtors, it would be Sally Williams, the super sophomore who is averaging team-best marks of 17.9 points and 11.1 rebounds per contest.

Cone, Guiao head 'Shin' clinic

THREE MULTITITLED COACHES FROM THE recently concluded Fiba Philippine Cup semifinals are among the instructors in the Shin-Shang Pu Basketball Coaches Association of the Philippines clinic set Feb. 29 to March 1 at the Rizal Memorial Coliseum.

Tim Cone of the Alaska Aces, Yeng Guiao of Red Bull, and Ryan Gregorio of the Purefoods Starks will provide valuable coaching insights in morning sessions prior to the afternoon seminars to be presided by Shin, the legendary South Korean disciplinarian during the '70s and his Olympic teammate, Yoo Jae-Hyung.

Gregorio, who allowed only five champ rings, is scheduled on Feb. 29 from 8 to 10 a.m. Cone on the same day from 2 to 4 p.m. and Guiao on March 1 from 2-4 p.m.

Alfonzo Dias, former coach of the Sta. Lucia Realtors, will cover the 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. session on March 1. For more details, call 8577958 to 60, fax at 687-4048 or email at hotline@inquirer.com.ph

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POC charter meet set Feb. 19

Dayrit, Go hold talks on possible election 'partnership'

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE PHILIPPINE OLYMPIC COMMITTEE has set a special general assembly on Feb. 19 to amend its present constitution and bylaws and align them with that of the International Olympic Committee.

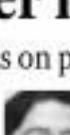
POC deputy secretary general Mark Joseph said the main purpose of the charter change is to legalize the Olympic body as a "national person" under the corporation code of the Philippines.

Joseph said the amendments will also allow the POC to tackle numerous pressing aspects like "mandatory, commercial partnership, sponsors, donor and joint requirements, among others.

"This is to keep up with the globalization of sport," said Joseph.

He added that the POC needs to become "fully compliant with the IOC charter, something that has been left hanging in the air long before [Peping Cojuangco's] became president for one reason or the other."

Critics, however, claim the amendments might influence the outcome of the POC elections set after the Beijing Games in August.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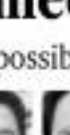
DAYRIT

Tankiansoks previously said POC chair and presidential contender Robert Aventajado earlier said that as presiding officer, he would agree to amendments for as long as they don't go out of bounds.

Meanwhile, former POC president Go Dayrit is hoping that next week's Asian rival Go Teng Kok of athletics yesterday in an apparent coalition move for the coming POC polls, according to POC director Harry Angping who brokered the meeting.

Angping, chair of the Amateur Softball Association of the Philippines, said the possibility of Go aligning his forces to support the presidential bid of Dayrit "is very close."

Go and Dayrit forged a partnership to oust former POC president Cholo Silverio in 2004 but their relationship turned sour over the years with the athletics chief shifting his support to Cojuangco in 2004.

Officials, Angping said, Cojuangco can muster 18 votes from among the 40 voting national sports associations, while Dayrit has at least eight votes in his favor.

Go need to have the support of 11 NSAs but the number has since dwindled through the years, Angping noted.

SLR top rookie also a nice guy

YESTERDAY AT the traditional pre-championship cocktail dinner, the most coveted award bestowed by the PBA at the Hotel Inter-Continental in Manila, I finally got to prove to myself that Ryan Reyes was indeed the super-talented to me by agent Mike Gonzalez more than three years ago in 2004.

Since he was drafted by his Locks last year, and as he started building a career for himself all the way to the finals, I have not stopped wondering if the Fil-Am rookie really is a namesake of Mike G's protégé, or if he's the same guy Mike was trying to get into the Hubbers Cocoon team at that time.

I remember Mike G was having a most difficult time looking for an assistant coach for Ryan who was then already married with two kids. Mike swore he was an excellent player and a nice guy as well, but nobody listened at the time. Perhaps it was because he was not too tall, especially by Hi-Am standards.

Ryan has been offer from an amateur team was a P5,000 monthly allowance. Mike decided to finance his board and lodging until he found a higher paying team for him.

That's how I got to meet Ryan. After a PBL game which was played at the Makati Coliseum, the latter was had a Chinese dinner somewhere on Jupiter Street. There we proceeded to Quezon City to look over an apartelle for Reyes.

Mike said the super-small lanes as we cocoon but remember the United States, if nothing good happens within a specified period of time.

I didn't hear nor read about Ryan again until last year.

Could he be the same caper? I asked myself.

Where Mrs. Lozada took the long winning streak in her circumstance, he was credited as one of those responsible for it. His name loudly resounded again when the Steelers entered the finals.

All this time, I never got a chance to take a long, good look at him at close range.

Even then, I could have forgotten his name, having met him only once. And Mike G, although now based in Manila, had gone out of circulation. There was no one to make the positive identification.

Yesterday, I made sure I could have the answer to a long nagging question. At the presscon, I went out of my way to look for Ryan.

His lanky aura caused to me as I approached the presidential table, so I had to ask him if he got a basketball scholarship.

He let out a big, wide grin when he recognized me.

He, he said Mike had introduced us back in 2004. "We had dinner, remember?" he said.

"You were already married at the time, right?" I was just tossing my memory.

Ryan pulled out his wallet to show me a picture of his two sons, aged 4 and 6. They will be flying in to join him this year, he said.

Somehow, I felt a deep sense of satisfaction having discovered that Mike's and Bobby Encarnado's Ryan Reyes is one and the same, the same guy who is now runner-up in the Rookie of the Year race.

Couldn't happen to a better fellow, I thought to myself.

"What is Ryan's biggest value to your team?" I later asked Hill coach Bayet Fernandez, who had given up a nursing career in favor of basketball.

Bayet was quick to answer. "His intensity. He plays a hundred and fifty percent in every game. He will kill himself to get that ball, to win."

Teams ready for beach volley tilt

By Rotilia S. Asuncion

MINDANAO STATE UNIVERSITY and University of the Visayas are back to defend their Season Beach Volleyball crowns against teams from more than 40 colleges and universities nationwide.

The beach volley national circuit, sanctioned by the Philippine Volleyball Federation (PVF), is slated to host 72 teams for the three-day elimination that will lead to the April 25-26 semifinal and final rounds in Boracay.

The Tagum Beach Volley Dome in the Boracay Park in Davao opens hostilities on March 6-8 with Mindanao teams vying for finals slots.

On March 20-23, action shifts to the Island Cove Hotel and Leisure Park in Cavite for the Luzon teams while the April 8-10 qualifying for Visayas squads will be held at the University of St. La Salle in Bacolod.

The winning teams duo will go to Boracay will vie for the top prize of P150,000 each for the men's and women's divisions.

Second runners get P75,000 each while the third placers will receive P40,000 apiece.

Inaugural season (1997) men's division winner University of Santo Tomas spearheads the Luzon unit composed of Adamson University Lyceum, College of St. Benilde, De La Salle-Dasmariñas, Adventist University of Manila, Philippine Christian University, St. Francis of Assisi College, St. Jude College, St. Louis University, Saint Bede College Alabang, Saint Bede College, University of Baguio, University of the Cordilleras, University of Luzon, University of the Perpetual Help Biñan and University of the Philippines-Diliman.

Representing Visayas are Cebu gets Persistence Generation, Bacolod-Negros University Siaki Dioceses College, Southwestern University, University of Iloilo, University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos, University of St. La Salle-Bacolod, University of San Agustin, University of San Carlos, University of San Jose-Recoletos, University of Southern Philippines and Western Visayas.

Returning their teams in this domain are teams from Agusan Institute of Technology, Ateneo de Davao University, Capitol University, Holy Cross of Davao College, Jose Maria College, Mindanao Institute of Technology, MSU-Marawi, MSU-Tawi-Tawi, Tawi-Tawi regional agricultural College, University of Mindanao-Tagum, Universidad de Zamboanga, Xavier University and MSU.

SAN SLOT courts, powerful smashes and hot volleyball action will again be on the summer menu with the launch of this year's edition of the Shakey's beach volleyball tournament.

'Kid gloves' now back in Palaro calendar

By Jane Navarro

THE FAMOUS TWIN ARE LITERALLY GOING to town with kid gloves.

The Palawang Pambansa will bring back boxing to the elementary division in the hopes of finding a gold-medal potential from the ranks of its competitors.

Beijing Olympics chief of mission Monico Puentevella announced yesterday that Subic tourism Secretary Jeoli Lapus assured him of this development during one of the presidential cabinet meetings in Malacañang both attended last week.

"Si (Lapus) is a big boxing fan and he assured me of [the inclusion]—all the sport in the future," said Puentevella, a Bataan Congressman who is also a vice president of the Philippine Olympic Committee.

Boxing, which was scrapped by the Deped in the elementary level for safety reasons, will again be in the calendar of events for the grade school level of the Palaro on April 20-27 in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan.

Tasked to handle the affairs of the bidets for the Philippine Sports Commission, Commissioner Eric Lustre has been closely coordinating with Deped officials regarding the resumption of the boxing events.

"Boxing in Manila draws the best medal hope of the country in the Olympics," said Puentevella, who has started a grassroots boxing program of his own by gathering young fighters aged 13-16 in a tournament in Bacolod City.

Puentevella noted that the inclusion of boxing in the Palaro, with the grade-school team program, will serve as cornerstone of a long-term plan for the disciplines in the 2012 London Olympics.

"If we fail to win a medal in Beijing, those programs could definitely help achieve our dreams in London," said Puentevella.

Puentevella is also set to attend and high school athletes will represent their respective regions to the week-long Palaro games.

Gomez, Sadorra join Russia chess

INTERNATIONAL MASTERS JOHN Paul Gomez and Julio Catalino Sadorra will represent the Philippines in the Aeroflot Open 2008 in international Chess Festival starting today in Moscow, Russia.

Other Filipinos racing to challenge the dominant Taiwanese are veterans Antonio Gabica and rising stars Jeffrey de Luna and Jayson Bautista.

The Taiwanese swept last year's five legs and also topped the grand finals held in Baguio, through Chiang Sung Jen. Chiang beat Filipino Lee Aaron Cardona, 11-8, to emerge as grand champion and pocket the top prize of $20,000 as Asia's Pool King of 2007.

"Our biggest threat is the Taiwanese players but we are ready," said Manalo, the 2006 Toyota World Pool Championships third placer.

Manalo, ranked former two-time Asian Games 9-ball gold medalist Yang Ching-shun as the toughest to beat, with Chiang, former world 9-ball champions Wu Chia-ching and veteran Ang Pang-chun as the other top contenders.

"The pressure is on me because a lot of Filipinos are expecting me to play very well," said the 29-year-old Bautista-mate, who was chosen by tournament organizers to complete Team Philippines with Pagulayan, the 2004 world pool titlist and Gomez, four endorsee.

Bautista-mate was chosen over Cordova, ex-double world titlist Roman Adame and Fisher Gomez. Marlon Bernardino, Emerlito Boado

Pagulayan heads RP 9-ball entries

FORMER WORLD CHAMPION ALEX PAGULayan and Marlon Manalo will spearhead the country's campaign in the 2008 Guinness 9-Ball Tour set 19 to March 2 in Taipei.

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COJUANGCO

Accel Olympic outfitter anew

THE COUNTRY'S TOP SPORTS OFFICIALS have decided to again turn on a local outfitter for the coming Olympic campaign.

The Philippine Olympic Committee announced yesterday that Accel, a leading sports apparel brand, will again serve as official outfitter of the Philippine team to the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

POC officials, led by president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco Jr., chair Bebot Severino Jude and secretary general Steve Hontiveros, signed the agreement Monday afternoon with Sportswear Philippines Inc. president Willie Ortiz and chair Philip Ca.

The POC's partner in the Philippine Olympic festival and uniform supplier for some of the teams in the PBA and several national sports associations, Accel has committed to serve the national team to the Olympics at the end of the year.

"It's always an honor to become a part of the national team's quest for glory," said Ortiz. "Our commitment, however, doesn't stop in the Olympics because we will always be here to help the national team in any way we can."

—Jane Navarro

Anton logs twin Rallysprint series kickoff victories

CARLOS ANTON SCORED A TWIN RELLY-ralling the MP-10 class recently in the kickoff of the 2008 Rallysprint Series in Subic.

Anton, reigning champion of the 2007 Hill-climb Series, teamed up with fellow Engineering Alliance Group/Sun driver Allen Gonzaga to drive a Mitsubishi Mirage Racing car to win the first six stages of the RP-10 class over runner-up Joel Ashmedai and third placer JP Tuason in the first stage of the five leg series.

"We worked just as hard for the win in round 2 and the team did a fantastic job in getting us to the end of the rally with no problems," said Anton.

Anton, aboard his trusty Honda CRX, rushed stage-wise with Carlo Garcia, who was riding in Mitsubishi, all day.

In the end, the duo in Gonzaga Engineering Alliance/Sun driver Allen Gonzaga, who was riding in Mitsubishi, all day.

In the end, the duo in Gonzaga Engineering Alliance/Sun driver Allen Gonzaga, who was riding in Mitsubishi, all day.

CARLOS Anton leresen through a rough segment of the series course.

Bubain's '89 trophy at SMC-PSA awards

SWIMMING GREAT ERIC BUBAIN'S Historic Best Male Athlete Award from the 1989 Kuala Lumpur Southeast Asian Games will be one of the top attractions from among the many sports items on display in the San Miguel Corporation-Philippine Sportswriters Association (SMC-PSA) Annual Awards Night at the SM Mall of Asia on Feb. 16.

Bubain's award was the first ever for a Filipino and also the first of his two feats, the other one coming in the 1991 Manila SEA Games. It is, however, interesting to note, that a portion of Bubain's 1989 award, including...

"The ball made up of pure gold sitting at the top of the award was stolen. Sadly, I was not able to recover it," said the trophy's titled swimmer-turned-sports official.

Bubain's award, plus other sports memorabilia from Asian icon Hidilyn Diaz-pinto and former tennis queen sports Lydia de Vega-Mercado, among others, will be exhibited in the days-long affair, which will formally begin at 10 a.m.

"I hope the sports memorabilia — at first in the PSA — will not only give our athletes a lofty objective to pursue, but inspire them as well to always aim for world-class excellence," said PSA President Aldrin Cardona, who also announced that awardees who failed to receive their invitations can get it at the reception area of the SM Mall of Asia during the awards day itself.

As Games and Amusements Board (GAB) chair, Bubain is also one of the guests in the annual two-hour awards ceremonies set to start at 5:30 p.m., to be broadcast by media partners ABC-5 and DZSR Sports Radio 918, and also supported by Blakey's, PBC, Repco, Accel, Tokyo, Raymundo's Trophies and Sculptures, Carvermate, Powerade, rewards.com, Egg-stra City, mens' Barrobel Toiletries, 40-21, and Raymond Yu and Thirty-Two of Mikmak Pastry.

Others officials attending the glitzy affair are Senate President Manny Villar, who will be the guest speaker; POC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco and OSC chairman William "Butch" Ramirez, among others.

World flyweight champion Nonito Donaire and 2008 Southeast Asian Games Best Male Athlete awardee Miguel Molina will be sharing the hefty loot of the Tour started.

ATHLETE OF THE YEAR
Nonito Donaire Jr. (Boxing)
PSA PRESIDENT'S AWARD
Eric Buhain
HALL OF FAME
Arnulfo Marcelo Tan Quinsay (golf), Antonio Alejandro (billiards), Rodolfo Cu Unjieng (golf), Ramon Fernando (golf), Rafael Ignacio Icasiano (golf), Rafael Ignacio Icasiano (golf), Rafael Recto (cycling), Jose Rizal Sy (bowling), Rafael Roberto Sycip (golf), Rafael Roberto Sycip (golf), Rafael Roberto Sycip (golf

SPORTS

Celtics trip Pacers, reach 40-win mark

INDIANAPOLIS—THE BOSTON Celtics became the first team to reach 40 wins this season with a 104-97 road victory over the Indiana Pacers on Tuesday.

With starters Kevin Garnett and Rasheed Wallace still absent through injury, Paul Pierce stepped up to score 20 points and grab 12 rebounds to help the Celtics earn their fourth win in five and improve to 40-9.

Boston coach Doc Rivers says not getting excited twice with the number of wins his team had garnered.

"I'm not looking at numbers and I didn't even know we had made 40 wins," Rivers told reporters.

"But we're getting better and better. We just need to keep improving. Every night is a new test."

Pierce, who will play in Sunday's All-Star game, also had five assists. Ray Allen had 23 points while Leon Powe added 16 points and nine rebounds. Rajon Rondo had 12 points, seven rebounds and seven assists.

Danny Granger led the Pacers with 33 points, 10 rebounds and five blocked shots.

"This was definitely a winnable game," Granger said.

"We just got away at the end with a lack of execution and our scoring droughts in the stretch."

In Atlanta, Chauncey Billups came through when it mattered, scoring 12 of his 16 points in the fourth quarter to rally Detroit past the Hawks, 94-90, the Pistons' ninth straight win.

Rookie Al Horford carried the Pistons in the early going, scoring 13 straight points for his team in the first quarter and finishing with 21. The Hawks lost their third win over Detroit in 30 games in six tenths.

In East Rutherford, New Jersey, Stephon Marbury came off the bench in the second half and scored 30 of his 34 points in a decisive spurt in the New Jersey Nets' 107-96 victory over the Toronto Raptors.

In Miami, Dwyane Wade scored a game-high 29 points, but missed a 20-footer at the buzzer for Miami—who hit a record eight straight and 13 of its last 14 games.

In Memphis, Hakim Warrick had 24 points and 13 rebounds...Justin Gordon-high totals—to help Memphis snap a six-game losing streak via a 107-99 victory over Sacramento.

It was the first win for the Grizzlies since they traded Pau Gasol to the Lakers on Feb 1.

In Chicago, Chris Paul had 25 points and 14 assists to help send Chicago to its ninth loss in nine games, 100-86.

—AP Reuters

BOSTON Celtics guard Ray Allen maneuvers in a duel against an Indiana double-team.

IN THIS ISSUE
■ NTC: Interconnection key to lowering rates /B2
■ BIR large taxpayers unit exceeds collection goal /B6

BUSINESS
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Philippine Daily Inquirer

Gov't to offer OFWs $100M in retail bonds

To maintain workers' earnings, RTB terms may include forex guarantee

By Dorris C. Dumlao

THE GOVERNMENT WILL SOON offer overseas Filipino workers and their families an initial $100 million worth of retail treasury bonds (RTBs) that may include a form of guarantee to protect their dollar earnings, said bankers privy to the issuance.

Top officials of the state-owned Land Bank of the Philippines, which acts as an adviser to the government's OFW offering, along with the Bank of ORIX, said the five- and a half-year US-dollar denominated T-bond offering with an annual yield of about 6 percent is currently being worked out.

The government hopes to issue the bonds in April.

OFWs and their beneficiaries may buy these RTBs for a minimum investment of $100 once they have shown proof that they are working abroad or that they belong to an OFW-supported household.

To address widespread concerns about the US dollar's downtrend against the peso, they said the offering would be structured in such a way that would give a foreign exchange cover to OFWs. This means that the OFWs may be given an exchange rate guarantee so that their RTB investments would not be diluted if the peso were to further appreciate against the US dollar.

"We want a hedge, it's easier, but that [forex guarantee] is what the OFWs are asking for," Landbank president Gilda Pico said over breakfast Tuesday night.

"It's something like a guarantee that, at the end of the term, you're protected from exchange rate risks," Landbank executives vice president Miriam Cruz-A. said. "For example, if [the guarantee is set at] 50:$1, even if [the peso] goes down to 55, we'll still give it."

Cruz said the financial mechanics on this hedging component are still being discussed. Also, the Bureau of Treasury is still reluctant to shoulder the cost of the foreign exchange cover.

But even if the BTr decides not to assume the proposed hedging mechanism with it, Cruz said, the underwriters may find a way to structure the RTBs to provide forex cover (sent to prevailing OFWs).

Cruz said that the 4 percent proposed yield is "good" rate for a US-dollar-denominated investment instrument in that it is really comparable to the yield now offered by Philippine banks' foreign currency deposit units (FCDUs) though not wealth-deposits-with large volumes of FCDU deposits.

"And it's not only the 4 percent (yield)," Landbank treasurer Bernie Teopaco added. "Together with the purchase of interest-bearing instrument, we are attempting to give them a hedge to the exchange rate (volatility) upon maturity."

In a separate interview, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said an OFW bond with a hedging mechanism may be feasible.

"I think it's a doable structure, but it's really the government that will decide on what kind of instruments they want to issue to our OFWs because, in general, it may have better approach if the investor is simpler," Tetangco told reporters yesterday.

"But it depends on the risk appetite of overseas Filipinos. I doubt the investment

GOV'T TO B2

For Credit Suisse, things appear to be quiet on RP's fiscal front

CLINCH-BASED FINANCIAL GIANT CREDIT Suisse expects the peso to appreciate at a more modest pace against the US dollar, likely hitting 39 or 39.5 centavos, due to the central bank's intervention.

Credit Suisse economist Cris Sacranda yesterday briefed members of the Fund Managers Association of the Philippines, saying that the peso would not likely post more than a single-digit appreciation this year because the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas would not tolerate another jump of sharp appreciation.

"We expect bank will allow their currency to appreciate sharply for two years in a row," Sacranda said. "I do see the peso breaking into 39 or 39.5 at the end of the year, but it's just a 6- to 8-percent appreciation and that's it."

Sacranda also said that the Philippines this year would likely post a respectable growth given domestic product of at least 5.6 percent despite the turbulent external environment.

The Singapore-based economist said he would like to see the government focusing on tax revenues, and relying less on privatization proceeds as well as continuing its strategy of paying down debt.

He noted that the government's debt to GDP ratio is still much higher compared to most other emerging markets in Asia.

Based on the latest government data, the debt to GDP ratio stood at 55.9 percent as of October 2007, still higher than the 47-percent mean among Asian economies.

He added that, for as long as the government could keep its budget deficit to no more than 1.5 percent of GDP excluding nonrecurring revenues, then there would be no cause for alarm.

DOF reverses stand, slaps highest excise tax rate on Pall Mall

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE HAS reversed its earlier ruling on the issue involving Pall Mall cigarettes, saying the brand should instead be slapped with the highest excise tax rate of P20.06 per pack.

The DOF ruling, to be implemented immediately by the Bureau of Internal Revenue, will require British American Tobacco (BAT) to increase its tax payment for Pall Mall from the current coverage of P6.74 per pack.

In the revised ruling, it issued yesterday, the DOF said that, since the Bureau of Internal Revenue had initially determined Pall Mall's applicable tax rate to be P20.06 per pack, then the tax rate could no longer be lowered. The tax law prohibits a downward tax reclassification of a cigarette brand, the DOF said.

The DOF ruling is now consistent with the position of the Bureau of Internal Revenue. The BIR has now ruled that Pall Mall should be slapped the highest excise tax rate because the brand used to be imported by Duty Free shops.

The BIR said the do-tax law requires the imposition of the highest excise tax rate on imported brands. Even though Pall Mall is no longer being imported, the BIR said the law prohibits a downward tax reclassification of a cigarette brand.

British American Tobacco protested the BIR's ruling and appealed to the DOF to classify Pall Mall as a mid-priced cigarette with an excise tax of P6.74 per pack.

BAT said a price survey conducted by the BIR itself would prove that Pall Mall is a mid-priced cigarette and should therefore be imposed the lowest tax rate. But the BIR ignored the results of its own market survey to the benefit of BAT's competitors, BAT said.

The DOF initially sided with BAT, saying the BIR should use its own survey as the basis in determining the applicable tax rate of Pall Mall.

But the DOF moved to reverse the BIR's decision after it learned from legislators Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile and the DOF, which is supposed to protect revenue collection of government, went against its mandate by ruling solely BAT.

Competitors of BAT, including Fortune Tobacco Corp. and Mighty Corp./ITC, also submitted their position papers to the DOF, insisting that Pall Mall should be taxed the highest excise rate.

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said the DOF ruling did not prohibit BAT from reimposing the Court of Tax Appeals to get a favorable ruling.

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NTC: Interconnection key to lowering rates

Regulator wants telcos to open int'l cable stations, connect with other networks

By Rizz T. Olchondra

IN AN EFFORT TO BRING DOWN INTERnational call and data rates, the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) is keen on widening the mandatory interconnection of backhaul networks to international cable landing stations in the country.

"Currently, only the company that has put up a cable landing station can extend this connectivity to the international networks, say in Manila, and from there other telcos can interconnect for last-mile connections," NTC Commissioner Jorge Sarmiento said in an interview. "There could be potential savings for the other telcos if they can hook up to the cable landing station itself."

NTC Commissioner Nereo Odchimar and Edgardo Catanyag explained that it is like "running from ground and having to load first in Mandaluyong getting a connecting flight to Cebu."

"There could be savings in flying straight to Cebu," Catanyag said. "That is the analogy of what we would like to do."

Odchimar added that backhaul interconnection would give end-users an option on which telco service to use since they would all be connected at competitive rates.

The three existing backhaul facilities were individually put up by the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT), Globe Telecom Inc. and Digitel Telecommunications Philippines.

Two more facilities are in the pipeline.

PLDT is set to spend more than $50 million on the Philippines' landing party to the Asia-America Gateway or AAG, a cable project which will provide Southeast Asian countries their first direct, high capacity cable connectivity to the US mainland. It is also upgrading its existing APCN2 (Asia Pacific Cable Network 2) system.

Globe, meanwhile, is spending $40 million just for the cable landing station of the TGN Pacific network which will link the country to Japan, Guam and the United States.

Digitel, which is part of the East Asia Group (EAG) submarine cable system, said through spokesperson William Panuncialman that it first wants to get industry feedback during today's hearing on the matter. Digitel last broke ranks with the ITC to make PLDT share backhaul charges to consequently reduce its existing call-by-call landing station.

PLDT said Globe could not be reached for comment.

Feed millers ask DA to lift tariff on food ingredients

By Amy R. Remo

LOCAL FEED MILLERS HAVE REQUESTED the Department of Agriculture to temporarily lift the tariff on feed ingredients, including corn substitutes, to ease the cost.

In a letter to Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap dated Jan. 28, 2008, the Philippine Association of Feed Manufacturers (Pafma) said the tariff cut should also cover soybean, soybean meal, dried distillers grains solubles and tapioca residue pellet.

"With the global trend of increasing commodities and its negative impact to our production costs, we believe that the reduction in tariff rate will provide economic relief to our feed producers, end-users, poultry producers and other industry stakeholders, and ultimately the consumers," Pafma said in the letter.

As of last month, prices of feed ingredients such as corn had risen to as much as P13.50 a kilo from P10.50-P11 last year. Prices of other ingredients such as soybean had also increased to a 37-year high of P24 a kilo from P15 in late 2006, fertilizer at P17.40, and coconut oil at P52.

Feeds constitute about 65 to 70 percent of the animal raisers' total costs.

Pafma president Norman Tanco said the rising costs of raw materials had been giving the feed milling industry a hard time.

Tanco said the situation was difficult for the industry as it could not pass on to consumers the increases in the costs of raw materials.

He, however, said his group would wait for the first quarter corn harvest before making any decision on whether or not to import feed ingredients, particularly yellow corn.

For 2008, the basic corn industry target production is as much 7.37 million metric tons, up by 6.2 percent from last year's production of 6.74 million MT.

Data from the DA had shown that the combined yellow corn and white corn production was estimated to grow by 447,781 MT this year, while area planted to corn was targeted to expand by as much as 66,302 hectares.

For Credit Suisse, things ...

Pantograph B-1

In 2007, the peso was Asia's best performing currency as it gained by P7.75 or 18.9 percent against the $5 dollar to close the year at 41.20 against the greenback.

The local currency's strong income has raised concerns on its adverse impact on two key sectors,...exporters and overseas Filipino workers who remit at least $1 billion a month.

In the last two years, the BSP has tried to temper the peso's rise by stepping up dollar to the spot foreign exchange market. Recently building up its foreign reserves to record highs.

The central bank has likewise used open market dollar sellers to settle foreign debts ahead of maturity.

It has also lowered its benchmark interest rates and liberalized restrictions on capital and current account outflows to relieve pressures on the local currency.

As of yesterday, the peso closed much weaker at 40.95, from Tuesday's 40.74, weakest close by political tensions brought on by the NBN-ZTE scandal. Local traders said the controversy caused the local currency to hack the favorable trend noted. Asian currencies traded to yesterday.

Analysts that I spoke to earlier explained appetite on higher risk, higher yield, say assets from emerging markets after American billionaire Warren Buffet refused to take over some of the liabilities of ailing bond insurers.

Asked by the Inquirer whether he thought the recent political noise would affect the favorable outlook on the Philippines, Recoring said he wasn't too worried about recent domestic developments.

"If it doesn't affect the management of the economy, then it's not something that I think will affect economic indicators," he said.

In his presentation, Recoring told Credit Suisse did not subscribe to the belief that emerging Asia could completely decouple from the economic slowdown in the US. But he argued that the Philippines had enough buffer to withstand external shocks. Boyd C. Fuentes

Shares close 0.7% higher

Pantograph B-4

recovery and domestic political issues clouded mood.

They said investors were reluctant to move given US concerns and controversy over allegations of corruption involving President Macapagal-Arroyo's husband and close aides.

The composite index added 22.48 points to 3,123.31 after moving in a tight range between 3,200.90 and 3,234.51.

The broader all-share index was up 10.41 points at 1,965.81.

There were 93 advancers and 31 decliners, while 55 were unchanged.

Volume amounted to 836.5 million shares valued at P2.8 billion ($68.6 million).

Among blue chips, Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. was up P50 at P2,960.

PSEC Energy Development Corp rose 1.8 centavos to P6.

San Miguel Corp's A shares rose P1 to P92. Its B shares gained P1.50 to P52.50. AFP

PHILEX MINING CORPORATION

IMPORTANT REMINDER TO SHAREHOLDERS

7 February 2008

To all Shareholders of Philex Mining Corporation:

Please be reminded that the Special Shareholders Meeting of the Corporation for the approval of the 30% stock dividend will be held on 21 February 2008, as earlier announced. The details of the meeting are:

Date: Thursday, 21 February 2008
Time: 2:00 p.m.
Venue: 4th Floor, Amorsolo Grand Ballroom
Holiday Inn Galleria Manila
One ADB Avenue, Ortigas Center
Pasig City.

Proxies must be submitted not later than Monday, 18 February 2008. We urge shareholders to submit their proxies to the Office of the Corporate Secretary at the Philex Building, No. 27 Brixton Street corner Fairlane, Pasig City.

BARBARA ANNE C. BRIALLOS
Corporate Secretary

Government debt down to ₱3.751T in Nov. '07

Total obligations declining due to strong peso, prepayment

By Michelle V. Rivera

THE GOVERNMENT'S OUTstanding debt slid to ₱3.751 trillion in November 2007 due to the strong peso and payment of maturing obligations, according to the Bureau of the Treasury.

The BTr said in a statement that P3.762 trillion of the outstanding debt as of November was denominated in peso, while the remaining ₱1.37 trillion was in foreign currencies.

Domestic debt slid 1.3 percent from ₱2.209 trillion in October, which was matched by a similar 1.2 percent drop in foreign-currency denominated debts from ₱1.389 trillion in October.

The BTr said that the strong peso shaved ₱46 billion from the government's debt in foreign currencies.

The peso averaged 43.217 versus the US dollar in November last year, an improvement over the 44.36 in October, data from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas showed.

A strong peso makes the government's dollar-denominated debts cheaper to pay locally. Another ₱68 billion was cut from the government's peso-denominated debt through net redemptions.

This occurs when debt payments exceed borrowings.

The impact of net redemptions and appreciation of the peso on the debt, however, was partially offset by the depreciation of other currencies against the US dollar.

The government also has access to other foreign currencies besides the US dollar and the drop in these currencies' value against the dollar results in an increase in the government's debt in dollar terms.

Meanwhile, the BTr also reported that the government's contingent debt settled at ₱499.4 billion as of end-November, dipping 0.7 percent from ₱502.8 billion in September.

The latest contingent debt was also 13.4-percent lower than the ₱577 billion as of November 2006.

Contingent debt refers to the liabilities of state-owned firms that carry a sovereign guarantee.

The government's debt stock, equivalent to about 56 percent of the country's gross domestic product in 2007, was a result of the government's chronic budget deficit.

The deficit—or the gap between revenues and expenses—forced the government to borrow to finance its budget.

Not wanting to taint its credit image in the international capital market, the Philippine government has been religiously servicing its debts.

Last year, 23 percent of the government's total expenditure went to interest payments.

While prompt payment of its liabilities allowed the country to easily access the foreign market every time it needs cash, the resulting debt servicing burden left little money for vital social services and infrastructure projects.

Economic managers, however, said the government's continuing efforts to reduce the debts would eventually increase its capability to fund more social services and infrastructure development projects.

Here comes the bribe

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banzuela III

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Buffett lifts mood on Wall St., Asian marts

BUFFETT

HONG KONG—EQUITY MARKETS rose on Wednesday after billionaire investor Warren Buffett made an offer to take on $800 billion of US municipal bond risk, but worries about the health of the US economy continued to pause worry.

Buffett's plan eased fears for the bankruptcy of bond insurers and lifted US stocks on Tuesday, inspiring buying interest in Asia.

"The news of Buffett and the perception that markets are becoming at a bottom are cheering up stocks," said Woo Jong-hyuk, an analyst at SK Securities in Seoul.

"While there's no consensus that the crisis is far from over, investor uncertainties seem to think at the current price levels stocks are worth buying."

Worries of US recession linger in major bourses

Global investors are bruised on one big question: The chance of a US recession, which could infect the global economy and close growth worldwide.

For Asian companies, the jolt from a weaker US consumer dollar also spells a tougher export battle.

Since the start of the year, Asian stocks have fared worse than US shares, with MSCI's index of Asian stocks outside Japan down about 13 percent against a fall of about 7 percent for the Dow Jones industrial average.

The pan-Asian index was up 0.5 percent yesterday moving to another gain across the region after overnight, a 2-percent fall in Shanghai, which was catching up with global declines after the week-long Lunar New Year holiday.

Japan's Nikkei average was up 1.4 percent.

Buffett's offer eased fear of credit downgrades at US bond insurers forcing the sale of billions of dollars of municipal debt and rattled the risk aversion fed that has stoked a US government bond market rally for much of the past seven months.

Japanese government bonds edged lower while recovery such as Japan's Mitsui Buildings Inc. rose.

The yen steadied after weakening to almost 107.3 to the dollar, helping blue-chip exporters such as Canon Inc.

"Basically, the market's worries have been just temporarily lifted," said Takashi Ueda, head of the investment strategy division at Mitsubishi Securities in Tokyo.

"This doesn't address the root cause of the crisis. The only thing that will really solve the situation is investors like a third time lose."

Buffett's move also capped recession for the Asian bonds towards $900 an ounce. The metal rose also smashed by a top industry official in India saying high prices were killing off demand.

However, returning Chinese traders pounced Shanghai copper. Future to the daily 4-percent limit as the market opened the metal raced to match gains in the London price.

Asian tech investors saw the brighter side of the US picture, despite a glitter Monday, which was dragged in a flat close by Apple Inc. and Research In Motion.

But Asian stocks' gains were limited by uncertainty ahead of key Japanese and US economic indicators including Japan's gross domestic product data due on Thursday.

Thursday's consequence will be US Federal Reserve Chair Ben Bernanke's testimony to Congress about the state of the US economy, following a quarterly survey

AGRICULTURE Secretary Arthur C. Yap (center) holds a variety of sweet pepper called "Jade Dragon". Also known as salad sweet pepper, grown by the farmers Association of Libuong Pagsabilo Growers Association (LYGA) at Brgy. Libuong, Pangian, Batad, at the demo farm of the first graduates of Diwata-Lung Training on Protective Culture on Vegetables. The demo farm is a project of the Department of Agriculture under the Gintong Manggagawa Ani -High Value Commercial Crops (GMA-HVCC) Program in collaboration with the Holcim Farm Corp. The produce will be sold in nearby resorts in Panglao.

GM posts record '07 loss of $38.7

DETROIT—GENERAL MOTORS Corp. reported a $167 billion loss for 2007 on Tuesday, the largest annual loss ever for an automotive company, and said it is making a new round of buyout offers to US factory workers in hopes of replacing some of them with lower-paid help.

The earnings report and buyout offer came as GM struggles to turn around its North American business as the economy weakens.

But GM chair and chief executive Rick Wagoner said that the company made significant progress in 2007, reducing structural costs as North American operations, negotiating a historic labor agreement and growing aggressively in Latin America and Asia.

During a conference call with analysts and media, chief financial officer Fritz Henderson said 2008 will be difficult. Yet the company sees the potential for significant earnings increases by 2010 to 2011 once it reduces its work force and labor costs and launches its newest lineup of cars and trucks.

The 2007 loss topped the previous record in 2002, when the company lost $223.4 billion on $1.2 billion in [illegible] charges.

Excluding the tax charge and other special items, GM lost $2 billion, or $4 cents per share, the very cusp[illegible] with a net loss of $2.2 billion in 2006, [illegible] operations.

For the fourth quarter, GM posted a loss of $722 million, or $1 a share, in the fourth quarter, compared with a net income of $1 billion in the year-ago quarter.

GM reported $149.1 billion in revenues for the year, down from $200 billion total $1.7 billion in 2006. Its automotive business [illegible] operating profit of $179 billion in 2007, up $1 billion from a year ago short [illegible] in emerging markets and favorable exchange rates.

GM was profitable in [illegible] region outside North Ame

First Gen gets $260M in bond issue proceeds

By Abigail L. Ho

LISTED FIRST GEN CORP has received the $260 million in proceeds from its recently issued convertible bonds, giving it enough cash to prepay some of its existing debts and those of its subsidiaries.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, First Gen vice president and compliance officer Tessa Santos S. said all of the net proceeds of the bond would be used to pay debts.

Of the $260-million proceeds, $229 million comprised the principal amount of the 2.5-percent coupon bonds due Feb. 11, 2013.

Bookrunners and lead managers JP Morgan Securities Ltd. then partially exercised its option to purchase up to $35 million of additional aggregate principal amount of the bonds by buying $35 million worth of the bonds on Jan. 15.

This effectively jacked up the proceeds to $304 million.

The bonds will be convertible, at the holder's option, into fully paid shares at an initial conversion price of P63.71 a share, subject to adjustments, according to Santos.

The conversion rights could be exercised on and after March 22, he said.

Top ICT innovators cited

By Rainer M. Dominguez

TEN INFORMATION AND communication technology firms were cited last Tuesday at the climax of the 4th Info-Com Global Sourcing Conference and Exhibition for excellence in their field.

The 10 awardees were Advance World Systems and Media Inc.in Outstanding Client Application of the Year; Tech Partner, Total Transcription Solutions and Seraphic Systems (Outstanding Customer Application of the Year); ISOS Global and Iron D (Outstanding Technology of the Year); and Transcontinent, Professor Technologies and People Support (Most Progressive Homegrown Companies).

Trade Assistant Secretary Ifelito Agustin-Reyes, who is also executive director of the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions, said the awards were intended to highlight the contribution of IT-counties to the growth of the Philippine offshoring and outsourcing industry, particularly in automotive and game development, tech office business process outsourcing, content content, software development and maintenance, and transcription.

Among the finalists were companies engaged in developing homegrown automated teller machine systems, training applications and back office systems.

"The e-Services Awards represented a milestone for the local industry as it produces some of the most impressive creative talent and business models in the country," Reyes said.

"We want to give our best and brightest a tangible endorsement to take their talents to global markets," she added.

For example, Total Transcription Solutions was cited for having developed an online on-the-job simulation program, which provides training for aspiring medical transcriptionists outside an actual MT office setting.

Reyes said the e-Services Awards was established in 2004 to encourage local ICT firms "to push the limits of their creativity and innovation through healthy competition."

This year's international board of judges includes Thelma Southcott Asia practice Paul Santos; Heidelberg country manager Mori Yoshiki; KCP Ventures Partners Inc. director Gary Yokoyama; Philippine Trade and Investment Center-New York, USA, trade officer Josephine Romero; and IBM Inc. research manager Kristofer Torres.

Gov't to offer OFWs $100M in retail bonds

Pinagsapi Bl

should be tailored as does level of sophistication," he said, noting that it may be possible to offer different kinds of investment instruments different OFW groups.

The BTR treasurer expects the foreign money now being remitted by overseas Filipinos and will be a follow-up to the P6 billion high-yielding peso-denominated deposit facility called long-term negotiable certificate of deposit (LTNCDs), which LandBank will soon re-launch.

Citing an estimate from the Asian Development Bank, Cuna said about 60 percent of money earned by OFWs is being kept in their host countries.

On the tax treatment of the RTBs, Cuna said, it's possible to exempt them because these are investments that will be earned abroad.

But as the event was, he said, they would be taxed at 7.5 percent comparable with the effective tax rate on PDEU earnings.

St. Michel Development Corporation will be developing the Filipino Provence, to be known as Port St. Michel, along the shores of Lake Taal.

According to **Miguel G. Carandang**, Chief Operating Officer of the company, **Port St. Michel** combines an exclusive residential village and a yacht club concept that eliminates the high costs and headaches of personally owning a boat. It will be the first major development in the Tourist Zone of the city of Tanauan, its location is the nearest access to Taal Lake from Manila. 30 minutes drive from Tagaytay and 30 minutes from Muntinlupa via converted roads.

SMDC's COO proudly says that "our company is very lucky to own a property which has all the features of a provence (pronounced as prah vahns). Taal Lake on one side and a river on another side allow us to recreate a semblance of provence by the lake and provence by the river; there is a hilly portion that will resemble the hillside provences; an inland canal network waiting to Taal Lake to the direct access of the canal tat permits to the lake - albeit reminds one of Port Grimaud in the French Riviera, or even Venice and Lake Como in Italy."

"We would like to treat Make in developing quaint Makyre communities with a charm all its own. **Port St. Michel** for instance, is not just a Filipino Provence, it is intended to be synonymous with a fulfilled life. It is going back to one's roots equipped with what it takes to have a good life and share it with the village and with the community around him. **Port St. Michel** is a celebration of life fulfilled."

Carandang explained that Provence in France is synonymous with the good life because those who have achieved what they wanted from life went back to the countryside to enjoy there the benefits of a fulfilled life, in the process upgrading the quality of provincial living. "Not content for instance," continued Carandang, "was a fisherman's village. Architect Francois Spoerry converted the swampy area into an intricate maze of canal network. It is now the playground of the rich and the famous in Europe." He observes that in contrast many of the successful Filipinos from the provinces of the Philippines tend to permanently reside in the urban centers, thereby leaving the countryside with handicapped progress. "**Port St. Michel** as Filipino Provence will reverse that process and trigger the return, not only of the Tanauenos and Batangueños, but of all successful Filipinos, to their provincial roots, and share with their 'kababayans' a slice of their fulfilled life."

"Because the location of **Port St. Michel** offers endless things to do in a spectacular natural scenery, it is a place where grandchildren will love to visit, a place where the family will like to bond, its unique charm makes it a place where one would want to recharge; its beautiful location is an inspiration to Filipino artists and writers to create their own masterpieces, the way Provence inspired most of the European artists like Van Gogh, Cezanne, Picasso, Matisse, Renoir, Chagall, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Hemingway."

Carandang is very proud that all these can be possible because a Tanauenio citizen Pastrao, his father Benjamin, chose to share his own fulfilled life with his kababayans, via a development concept that blends and reaches out to the community instead of planning for a secluded enclave for the elite. "We shares that **SMDC** has already set up a cooperative in Gamalesa, town community to **Port St. Michel**, a mixed farm and a livestock farm are taking shape in coordination with the Tanauan City government and in the planning stage are new cottage industries which will mean additional sources of income for the residents."

SMDC's COO concludes, "**Port St. Michel** will be a special place for everyone's family and friends and a testament to what are truly most important in life - love and relationships."

St. Michel Development Corporation may be reached at tel. nos. (02) 2241-3871 to 75, or visit their office at 3rd Floor, Gamalesa Commercial Center, Gamalesa, Batangas. Email: gamalesa@yahoo.com

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STERLING BANK OF ASIA EXPANDS NETWORK WITH THREE NEW BRANCHES

Barely a year since it started operations, the Sterling Bank of Asia continues its relentless pursuit to reach clientele in the key Metro Manila nationwide. Sterling Bank starts the 2008 lunar new year with the expansion of its branch network to 8 operational new branches strategically located in Zen 88 Pupil Avenue in Makati, Banawe in Quezon City and Davao-Matinecode. These additions bring the Bank's total branch network to 12 nationwide.

The Sterling Bank of Asia started operations in March 2007 in response to the government's mandate to create specialized financial institutions that would support the development and growth of the small and medium enterprise sector. Sterling Bank is capitalized at P1 billion, thrice the BSP's minimum requirement, making them one of the top 10 highest capitalized thrift banks in the country.

Sterling Bank's branches are located in Ayala Avenue and San. 88 Pupil Avenue in Makati, Greenhills, Balintawak, Mandaluyong-Ortigas, San Fernando-Ortigas, Ongpin, Grace Park-Caloocan, Valenzuela, Iloilo, Bacolod, and Davao-Matinecode. A new corporate center along Ortigas Avenue in Greenhills is set as additional branches in Cebu-Fuente-Carrera, Cebu-Magallanes, Emerald Avenue in Ortigas and in Ortanez are in various stages of construction.

"We have had a very good year considering that we started the bank from scratch", says Lumbres to Villena, Sterling Bank President. "Our business plan includes the set-up of structures in the first year and strengthening and stabilizing activities in the second year. This year, we will continue to open branches nationwide and are targeting to have a network of 20 branches by year-end. We will also continue to expand our basic products such as peso and foreign currency deposits and consumer (auto, housing, personal, salary) and SME loans. In addition, we will offer our customers higher level value products like cash management, visa debit cards, trust operations and government securities dealership," he adds.

Sterling Bank of Asia aims to set a new standard in the banking industry by providing its clients with integrated and innovative products at the best value, always package with excellent customer service and in very personal touch such as free-flowing coffee available in their branches.

"Excellence will never cease to be attractive. Our growth will be based on our intent to create a brand of excellence from the start," stressed Mr. Villena.

Sterling Bank is owned by JTKC Equities Inc., Star Equities and Rockwell Equities Inc. JTKC and Star Equities have investments in various companies which are involved in a wide range of industries from logistics to finance, real estate, manufacturing, and hotel and resort properties. Among them are the Discovery Suites in Ortigas Center, the Rockwell Group of service apartments, Rare Vinyl Tiles, and Rockwell Global Residence. Rockwell Equities is also invested in, shared and actively engaged in the development of low to medium cost housing in the Cavite area and Batangas areas.

BIR large taxpayers unit exceeds collection goal

Improved audit system led to better performance, says Hefti

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE yesterday reported that its large taxpayers service (LTS) unit, which collects taxes from the country's top 1,000 corporations, exceeded its revenue target for January.

In a statement, the BIR said the LTS collected P52.06 billion in January, higher than its P50.93-billion goal for the month.

The agency said the figure was also higher than the P30.17 billion collected in the same month last year.

Revenue Commissioner Lilian Hefti said LTS' performance during the month covered could be attributed to efforts aimed at improving the auditing of large companies.

Hefti said the BIR created six groups from within the agency to monitor major industries covered by the LTS. These are the manufacturing, banking and other financial intermediaries, insurance, real estate and trading, utilities and transportation, and other services.

The BIR said dialogues between the BIR and the large taxpayers were held to address issues that were dragging down tax collections.

Earlier, the BIR claimed some large companies had been failing to remit the taxes they withheld from suppliers.

The agency said the LTS implemented various programs to shore up its collections. These include enrollment, improving its human resources, tighter accounting of tax payments, intensified audit of tax returns and the use of benchmarking systems.

Under the benchmarking system, the BIR compares the percentage share of a company's tax remittances with industry averages. A huge discrepancy between a company's tax remittances with the industry average would prompt BIR to conduct tighter audit of the company.

The LTS accounts for about 60 percent of the BIR's total tax collections.

The unit's collection goal for January was based on the full-year target of the BIR of P545 billion, which is, however, considered ambitious by the agency as it was still working on the lowering of the figure.

The BIR had asked the Department of Finance, its mother agency, to reduce its target to P502 billion this year. The BIR earlier said the P545-billion target for this year was unrealistic given the prevailing low income tax environment.

Last year, the BIR was tasked to collect P503.9 billion, but missed it by P13.6 billion.

"Striking the BIR to collect P545 billion this year, which is 10.3 percent higher than its unattained 2007 goal, would be too much to ask of the agency," said a BIR official.

The DOF however, wants the BIR to stick to its original target for this year.

"There are other macroeconomic factors that could help increase tax collections this year, including the steady growth of the economy," a finance official said.

MAKATI MED ANNEX NEARS COMPLETION

Makati Medical Center board chair Manuel V. Pangilinan (left) leads the topping off ceremony for the hospital's annex building, which is expected to be completed in August 2008. With Pangilinan are Jody Ann Lim Ty Bunsi, director; Bernadine Siytangco, treasurer; Francisco Ricon, independent director; Dr. Cristina M.C. Antonio, director; and Dr. Manuel Fernandez Jr., SVP and director for professional services.

LBP '07 profit up 19%

STATE-OWNED Land Bank of the Philippines posted a 19-percent increase in its net profit last year to P4.2 billion on higher investment and treasury, and effective control on expenses.

In a briefing, Landbank president Gilda Pico said the bank was targeting a profit of at least P4.5 billion for this year.

In 2007, gross revenue went up by 5 percent or P1.24 billion over a year ago, fueled by income from loans, investments and foreign exchange.

But interest earnings declined by 6 percent year-on-year to P11.1 billion due to lower investment rates, but profits from investments and foreign exchange jumped by 18 percent and 136 percent, respectively, hitting P6.2 billion and P5.9 billion.

About P97 billion or 71 percent of the bank's total loan portfolio was devoted to priority sectors—farmers and fisherfolk (13 percent), microenterprises and small and medium enterprises (15 percent), livelihood projects (2 percent), agribusiness (16 percent), agri-industrial projects of state firms (30 percent) and socialized housing projects (9 percent).

Pico said spending rose by only 0.3 percent, contributing to the bank's improved financial performance.

Landbank kept its No. 4 rank in the banking sector in terms of assets, loans and deposits.

Boris G. Bandoja

Makati court junks La Costa complaint

By Abigail L. Ho

THE MAKATI REGIONAL Trial Court has dismissed a complaint filed by La Costa Development Corp. against Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. over the bidding of the 22-year National Transmission Corp. concession.

The court earlier effectively removed all remaining obstacles to the completion of the Transco privatization process.

La Costa had asked the court to stop PSALM from bidding out the Transco concession.

In a decision dated Feb. 5, 2008, Branch 61 of the Makati RTC said La Costa "failed to state a cause against defendants PSALM and PSALM president Jose Ibazeta."

"La Costa's allegations of fraud were not specified, which is another manifestation of lack of cause of action to warrant its grant of a writ of preliminary injunction," Presiding Judge J. Godfrey Hale said.

He added that La Costa "even failed to establish and prove its blanket allegations and motherhood statements on fraud."

The La Costa-ASC Lavalin consortium failed to prequalify for the Transco bidding in October 2007, which prompted it to file a case against PSALM, accusing it of disregarding the law and its own bidding rules.

The group, however, failed to get the nonparty of the court, with the Makati RTC rejecting the consortium's bid to secure a temporary restraining order to stop bidding last Dec. 11.

In its Feb. 5 decision, the Makati RTC said that "from the evidence adduced by the parties, it appears perspicuous that PSALM's action of disqualifying La Costa was based on the published and accepted bidding procedures, which were previously revealed to the plaintiff." The court, therefore, ruled that La Costa's argument that Ibazeta had a bias toward the winning consortium, led by Metro Ore-Grid Resources Corp., because of his supposed relationship with businessman Enrique Razon, is

DFNN unit to hold IPO

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lazaro

BUSINESS PROCESS OUTSOURCING (BPO) facilities provider Hatchibaba Inc., a 35-percent owned unit of listed information solutions firm Diversified Financial Network Inc. (DFNN), is planning plans to sell stocks to the public through an initial public offering.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, DFNN assistant corporate information officer Cinchia Tuhi said the board of Hatchibaba had approved a plan to tap the services of Amalgamated Investment Bancorporation as lead manager and lead underwriter for the planned IPO.

Segrest said he said the firm was aiming to raise P200 million from the offer.

Hatchibaba provides BPO facilities to start-up and established firms needing shared facilities and resources in the information technology, logistics, education and BPO industries.

The company is also considering possible investments in high-growth industries such as online gaming, education, and outbounding (call) insurance and transfer companies.

In 2000, Hatchibaba Inc. (formerly Hatchibaba.com) invested in Intelligent Wave Philippines Inc. (IWI), which was into systems integration software and technology development. It has been actively providing professional services and products to the Philippine financial and banking sector since 1991.

People, Events & Products

Editor Arnie Fajardo

Microtel Inn & Suites to rise in SM MOA

MICROTEL INN & SUITES, the first Microtel in Metro Manila and 11th in the Philippines, will soon open in Good Vice SM Mall of Asia Complex, Pasay City. It will be strategically across SMX Convention Center and with a magnificent view of Manila Bay.

Licensor of the Microtel property is Good Vice City Hotel Corp., a joint venture corporation composed of Microtel Development Corp., Andrew Investments Corp. and the SM Prime Management & Development Corp.

Targeted to open in November 2008, Microtel SM Mall of Asia will provide comfortably clean, comfortable, safe and secure accommodations at very reasonable rates. Room considerations will include shelves to harvest valet stations, queen-sized beds that meet characteristic standards, individually controlled air-conditioning units, fire sprinklers, complimentary coffee and tea, flush-in-toilets and chairs, remote-control television with cable connection, audio functions telephone system with IDD and MDD, and a compatible port for fax and modem. Suite amenities will include a wet bar, refrigerator, coffeemaker, microwave oven and access to sleeper. Likewise, Microtel will provide ample space for short-term or extended stay business travelers in most comfortably, and a professional setting for small meetings.

Microtel Inn & Suites is an international chain of limited service hotels under the Global Hyatt Group with 318 properties operate under construction over 60 countries.

Other Microtels are located in Boracay, Baguio, Batangas, Cavite, Davao and Tacloban. This 2008, Microtel will also open in Cebuanoan, Mactan Cebu and Palawan.

All Microtels in the Philippines are managed by Microtel Development Corp., the hospitality arm of the Phoenix Group. The Philippine Microtel group also holds the master franchise for Southeast Asian, an agreement extended over hotel chain also under Global Hyatt.

For the sixth consecutive year, the Microtel brand was awarded highest in guest satisfaction among budget hotel chains in J.D. Power and Associates' 2007 North America Hotel Guest Satisfaction Study. For reservations or franchise inquiries, please call (632)671-7171 or (632)635-7171, e-mail sales@microtelphilippines.com or log on to www.microtelphilippines.com

WINNER OF A CITYLAND CONDO UNIT

Citylander glad to announce the raffle winner of a condominium unit at Makati Executive Tower B located at Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue, Makati City to Susan Olep. Olep, a call center agent, was raffled the unit during the Citylander Day event held on the 2007 Leading Condominium Developer by the Office of the President for Metro Manila. It was the consecutive period in 2006 that the years 2001-2005 and in 2007 for the years 2004-2006. Susan Olep, a buyer of The Manila Residences, said in only two hours that she made a right decision in choosing living there Citylander. The Manila Residences is ideally located across Metro Manila University where she chosen to send her children as the school is just nearby. She heard good feedbacks about Citylander which couldn't assure for her to decide. She knows that it would be easy to avail not her unit which would mean additional income for her. She definitely would continue saving. Alongside in ordering Citylander's two family and friends as she won Nikon D40 to the very first accounts that have handled Shaneil in the auction Front mall). Caroline Cruz - Dimaiwat Marketing Communications Specialist of SM), Jonah Sandoval - senior investment consultant, Dr. Andrew Lucero - president of Citybank, Susan Chua - whose and her daughter Nicol Chua and Marianne Magno - assistant marketing specialist of Citybank Like Mary, you can be one of Citybank's satisfied buyers. Enjoy a promotion of zero interest rates when you rent out your unit. Whether for Makati, Manila, Ortigas or Pasay, Citybank has a condo unit to meet ever to suit your lifestyle. For further details, visit the website at www.cityland.com

Great news from Chanrees

CHARREZ ANNOUNCES THE LAUNCH OF ITS OFFICIAL WEBSITE, www.chanrees.com.ph. The site is compact with concise treatment of today's young women as it is equipped with sections that are basically stylish, practical and educational. The new Chanrees website offers browsing pleasure with vital information on the different lifestyles of the modern young women. The site also allows avid fan-surfers participation from the members as they cast safe guesses which will be posted in the "Ask Us" page of the website together with the very helpful reply from the Chanrees specialists. Most of all, the website presents Chan Ivan's wide range of feminine protection products that suit every woman's needs. As a sidelite, Chan rates to pamper every gift seeker for the first 100 go to who will login up. Be fast by and log on to know chanrees more get smart!

SLIF OPENS 4TH FINANCIAL STORE IN BINONDO

As the Chinese welcome the Year of the Rat, Sun Life Financial Philippines (SLFP) opens its fourth Financial Store located at Binondo, Manila in order to serve its growing clientele. The Financial Store in a one-stop shop for the financial needs of individuals and corporations.

SLFP clients, Asian Green Binondo, other SLFP Financial Stores are located at Greenbelt, Makati; and Gaisano City, Lapulapu City. Also setting during the inaugural ceremony, Binondo vice-mayor Dennis Cuna graced the occasion with the Chinese New Year festivity, were SLFP president and CEO Henry Joseph Moreno 2nd from left), Erik Vice Manalang, member for sales Rina Enid Yu, right).

HDMI ADOPTS BARANGAY 727 IN SAN ANDRES

Manila Diabetes Association (MDA), Manila's premiere healthcare institution, together with the SM Supermalls of the Philippines, recently signed a commemoration of agreement wherein MDA will be adopting Barangay 727 in Ordo Area in order to this MDA Community Services Program dedicated on Santa came to Malibong-ka Barangay (1999). Sponsored by this MDA-characterized of the Philippines, Inc. (MDA) in partnership with the corporate-social responsibility department, this CMS program seeks to establish health programs in depressed communities and to provide health care services to the underprivileged. Several programs have been introduced, such as the nutrition-wholesale clinic, health seminars and dialogues, health lectures and training of volunteer health workers. Among other implementations of the said program are medical-dental missions and feeding from Medicinals Foundation. Photo shows Dr. Rolando Roy, chair, MDA department of family medicine and member of the board, MDA president Dr. Maria Mercedes Gotuaco, MDA president Dr. Lim, City of Manila and Dr. Lorraine Sandino, officer Manila Health Department during the contract signing.

BAYER TIES UP WITH GOLD'S GYM

Bayer Philippines Inc. and Gold's Gym Philippines recently inaugural up to provide exercise with an individualized program for clients of the gym with Regal-Lifestyle Vitamins. The "Individuals at the Gym" campaign will start in their Regal-C vitamin supplement. During 90 Days-Regal-C intakes are seen given members will also have their vitamin consumed used at the Gold's Gym with the first two months membership at Gold's Gym Greenhills Powerhouse and Gallleria in Ortigas. Signing the agreement were Bayer's MS Bayer HealthCare vice-president Lani general manager Rafael Bilbao, Regal-C Pro and manager Angela Sorongon. Gold's Gym Metro CEO Antonio Bayot, Gold's Gym Philippines marketing manager Angelo Mendez and Bayer HealthCare - consumer unit MS Bayer HealthCare colleagues Neal Vince Bonell.

MAKIKARE ANTI-TB PROGRAM IN PAYATAS

Last Nov. 9, 2007, Makiri launched its 2nd annual outreach program to fight TB Payatas, Quezon City, in line with its commitment to contribute one of the top hospitality healthcare access of the Philippines. Makiri's extensive product information campaign of Payatas. The makiri outreach program aims to provide TB awareness throughout continuing attendance, conducted by distribution of anti-TB medications. Shown are (from left) Jose Pedro Perez, Makiri vice president and CEO and Dr. Marie Odette Makiri medical director.

Product Files

AOS Specialist Sore Throat Relief Range

RECOGNIZED THE NEED FOR fast sore throat relief, Glaxo-SmithKline (GSK) recently introduced the new Acting C-Gel Specialist Sore Throat Relief Range and its existence. Paolo Santiago, The new Acting C-Gel Specialist Sore Throat Relief Range includes a variety of products such as pastilles, soothers, antiseptic mouthwash and lozenges that you doctor recommended for fast, effective sore throat relief. The oral antiseptic and lozenges have an unsweetened centrepiece active to fight sore throat-causing germs. The pastilles and soothers contain unique herb extracts and essential oils that provide a strong, soothing sensation for dry, itchy throat.

Photoline opens at SM Cebu

PHOTOLINE SECURITY opened its new board at SM Cebu. Photoline's latest branch is located at the 2e floor of the north wing near the department store's entrance. Photoline SM Cebu is their 9th Photoline branch located at SM Supermalls. Photoline store has one of the largest branch networks in the country, with branches located at strategic cities. The company's well-trained staff is known for giving quality customer service. Photoline services range from digital printing, studio shoots and ID photos. Photoline's Photographers can avail of their special wholesale printing rates by requesting at its Mini Photo Lab counters.

SM ST. AGNES. All stores also carry a full line of digital cameras at amazingly low prices. Customers can avail of the free items with each camera purchased.

JAMES HARDIE SHINES IN PHILCONSTRUCT 2007 EXPO

James Hardie, the world leader in fiber cement technology, made a successful participation in the recently concluded PhilConstruct 2007 exhibition held at the World Trade Centers in Manila. Shown in the James Hardie booth going are (L-R) Jose Mari Chan, Chairman of the company, which includes Hardie Plus Durable Fiber Cement Board, HardiFlex Flooring System, HardiPlank Fiber Cement Weatherboard, HardiPanel Ceiling & Wall Panels, Trimboard, Textured and HardiFlex Texture Coating Paint.

Samuel Kendall Bryant, Supported by the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA), the exhibit has a collection of record-of-expanding business networks and generating volume locations for construction and building products and services. Over 500 participants exhibit booth and in the event, which aims to ensure that the foundation for steady supply of quality and cost effective technologies, services available and fostering only advanced for the best and industry to remain globally competitive.

Philippine Digestive Health Week 2008

PEOPLE TEND TO BE SHY TO TALK TO DOCTORS ABOUT DIGESTIVE PHYSICAL PROBLEMS, says the Dr. Nelly Lee, colon cancer and other digestive diseases can be detected like Sinclair Lay Pioneer of the Philippine Digestive Health Week 2008. It will be held on the entire day of March 3, at the Megamall Mall 1 of SM Megamall. Acknowledged experts in digestion diseases will be on hand to make all lectures to patients about various digestive ailments. The event, organized by the Philippine Society of Gastroenterology, Philippine Society of Digestive Endoscopy and the Philippines Society of the Philippines and its associated by Dr. Anna Pacific (Philippines) Inc. For inquiries, contact (632) 631-PLAN (7526). Philippine Digestive Health Week 2008.

Top prosthetics makeup expert in RP for workshop

LEADING SPECIAL EFFECTS ARTIST CHRIS MAKEHAM COMES TO THE Philippines for a series of hands-on workshops on prosthetic makeup, an exciting field that has become a specialty in the local entertainment industry. The Chris-date workshops are scheduled on Feb. 14 and 15, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Rocky Reyes Learning Institute (RRLI) in Quezon Manila. Meaghan Reyes of the Cambridge School of Visual and Performing Arts, is a highly respected lecturer and internationally known speaker, with a number of achievements under his belt, including awards with top designers and artists Dior and Vivienne Westwood, and shows at fashion shows, exhibitions, media events, and conferences. Recently, he has run workshops in Taiwan, Russia, and Japan on learning prosthetics. While it is the artists that perform the roles of superheroes, fantastic creatures, monsters, monsters, and bloody victims, that can only be truly possible one can with the use of special prosthetic make-up effects. The workshop is open to all with limited slots only. For inquiries, call 710-4848 or e-mail info@rrli.edu.com.

Arnaldo HS '71 grand alumni homecoming

CALLING ALL ARNALDO HIGH SCHOOL CLASS '71, THERE WILL BE A grand alumni homecoming on Feb. 16, at 1 p.m. to be held at Arnaldo High School Grounds. See you all there!

Focus on Australia with Austrade

WITH ITS HEADSTEN PLACING ITS EVENTS FROM THE PHILIPPINES TO Australia since 1999, Klarc started with its study in Australia over the people and the country. Klarc's Australia Education Fair is a yearly event that is now in its ninth year. Now they can! Changes in the immigration laws in Australia have opened up a whole new range of opportunities for students and for professionals who want to live and work there. The study in Migrate remains in almost everybody aged between 17 to 50 who wants to study, there work or migrate in Australia. Australia, the Australian State Commission, will start the summer edition sessions on the scope and benefits of visa Australian education. Australia's current Region Northbrokers and Rhodesians courses and educational institutions in Australia and the different types of student visas. Most visits will be presenting the world's leading culinary and hospitality talents. La Cuisine Bleu, and Australasian Immigration Services will be presenting the many options for working and living in Australia. The seminar will be held at the ABA Conference Center on Feb 25 at 6 p.m. As the seminar will be held with the Australian officials, every body and hospitality attend will be able to ask questions. Australian Consulate General Rhodesians and other colleagues attended throughout the country will, etc., specialized Australia and or training the information to 5505-2370 MET. Further details and registration forms are also available from the Klarc Australia office at www.klarc.com.au.

Bits & Clips

St. Louis College Valenzuela celebrates 30th year

ST. LOUIS COLLEGE VALENZUELA WILL CELEBRATE its 30th founding anniversary on Feb. 15 – 16, with activities inaugural by the theme "Habitday ang Inyong Pangarap" (Live Your Dreams) and which showcase the finest music, traditions and concepts of an authentic Louisianan culture. Rain and rainbow, and share, bingo social, cooking show, dance and lyrics competition, awards night, fashion show stage play, candlelight parade, and the grand ball. Sugarfree are just some of the much-awaited events in this exciting three-day festivity. Cash incentives and scholarship grants are also up for grabs. For more information, contact the organizing committee at 292-0497 / 292-0170 / 292-0804, email sbc@usa.com.ph or visit www.slcv.edu.ph.

Valentine's Day at Azarro Bistro & Bar

CELEBRATE VALENTINE'S DAY AT AZARRO WITH THEIR SHANKLIKE SET dinner and let the night entice you with their solo entertainment. Menu includes: soup a cream of broccoli with smoke-served crispy bruschetta; salad (Azarro's cobbler salad's dressed Lovers Kitten bacon bits and your choice of mushrooms such as sautéed one Pasta di Fungi (grilled chicken sausage or linguini with mushrooms and cheese); Pollo con carnival (tender sautéed chicken breast with pineapple, onion, chilies, pineapple and mushrooms); or fruit and fish grilled beef tenderloin and prawns with garlic vinaigrette. All served with sparkling wine. Azarro Bistro & Bar is located at Landco Center, 37 San Miguel Avenue, Ortigas Center, Pasig City.

Memoirs in back

ISABAKOK THE METRO FOREST MEMORABLE LAUDATIS RHYTHM GETS live to back with their trademark sound and original take back! The group that gave a whole new meaning to the 70's standards, 80's grooves and jazz genres has finally came and hits last with a renewed drive and fresh ideas to spice up their repertoire. Now managed by Andy E. Ortiz of Full Blast Productions, Memoirs are composed of original members Jerome Bulfot on vocals, Steven Dash on drums/backup, Danny Alcaraz on bass and new recruits Elbert Alcantara on guitars and jazz trained Delfin Bautista, Superheroes have just something burning this February with the launch of their 4th album and regular gigs. Hits '70 (Week of Notebook), Restaurant's Plaza Manila Park, 14 J Nuevo at Pio Bar Mamonsuki, Ortigas, Saturdays at 9:00's Pinoy Rock Restaurant Sundays at Mamonsuki's Pin Bar, for update on other hot Band attractions and services, log on to www.fullblastproductions.net

TeleTech bags Regional O&O Excellence Award

FOR ITS OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF "BEST voice" initiatives, TeleTech, the largest and fastest-growing BPO company in the Philippines, won the prestigious Regional Outsourcing and Offshoring (ROO) Excellence Award. The award was granted by the Dallas-based IT-Ade and Industry (ITA) as part of the recently-conducted IT Services Global Outsourcing Conference, the country's premier BPO industry event, Eduardo Ayuzado, TeleTech vice president and general manager for the Philippines, said the award is a testament of the company's exceptional commitment to developing world-class Filipino talent in these regional hubs. TeleTech currently operates ten delivery centers across Metro, employing more than 10,000 workers.

"Success is a state of mind.
One not only has to be in that state.
One has to live there."

One
CENTRAL

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SUCCESS HAS A NEW FACE. AND A NEW NAME.

An extraordinary world opens its doors only to the very few. One Central. Your own place in the privileged location for Makati's A-list: the central business district. Here, the city's best destinations are at your command. Be neighbors with the cream of the corporate world on the premier side of the CBD.

Enjoy convenient access to everything chic at grace Gotesbeth. And with your proximity to a master-planned network of roads and pedestrian streets, reach the rest of the nation's hot spots with ease. At home, experience all the hello and whistles of opulent CBD living. The residential suites are pre-furnished with modern comforts. And you can choose from entertaining dining, pool or cityscape views. Leisure amenities, a retail row and a man-made rainforest offer hours of recreation right at your doorstep. And an attentive concierge sees to your needs, making each day that much more indulgent. Discover life on the high end in the country's new landmark of success. One Central.

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LIFESTYLE
Lifestyle Editor Gina B. Zulueta
FITNESS ● WEDNESDAY 180 ● THURSDAY FOOD ● FRIDAY

CLOCKWISE from left: Chocolate Mango Fritters, Mango Sherbet, Cinnamon Ginger

ALL MADE of sugar and hand-pulled and sculpted by Scalfaro

Easy-to-do sweet Valentine surprises

KITCHEN RESCUE
Reggie Aspiras

BE HUBBY LIVES ON SWEETS. I BAKE and would like to surprise him on Valentine's Day. Can you share some nice recipes?

MRS. SWEET TOOTH

Mrs. Sweet Tooth,

Don't know if it is too late since today is Valentine's. Day but...as the saying goes... Better late than pregnant! Oops! Never mind!

I took the liberty of leaving you to the hands of a master, chef Frederic Scalfaro, since today is a special day.

His credentials are remarkable: 2000 Gold Medal, Champion of Europe Pastries, Rotisserie, Lyons, France; Third Prize in Artistic Showpieces 1997 Silver Medal, Trophee Europeen Coulommiers, France; 1996 Silver Medal, Grand Prix International Mandarine Napoleon, Brussels, Gold Medal, Professeur Patissier de Belgique, Prix FLUBCA-1 Union International Boulangerie Chocolaterie Glace; 1995 Gold Medal, Trophee du Meilleur Artisan Europeen, Brussels.

CHEF Frederic Scalfaro

Scalfaro is currently the pastry chef of Antonym Restaurant. The first two of his short courses in chocolate praline making at DCASIE (International School of Culinary Arts and Hotel Management).

If you wish to learn how to make decadent chocolate bonbons, I suggest you go and learn from him!

I had the privilege of working with Scalfaro one Thursdays ago for my All Things Sweet episode in "Asian Cooks for Mars" (Mainly network, Channel 74). He did Chocolate Fritters, as well as Pulled and Blown Sugar for the first time ever, from start to finish, on Philippine television. What a honor that must definitely be!

Truly, this man is a genius, a maestro. Under his skillful hands all things sweet are transformed into decadent works of art. Watching him at work was like watching a man in prayer.

The biggest compliment I can give is that this chef is so focused at what he does and does not even know it!

One thing's for sure, with Scalfaro's presence, the world of chocolate and pastry will be rocked inside out!

Mrs. Sweet Tooth, here are some recipes from chef Scalfaro. I hope you will have time to surprise your husband. The recipes are actually quite simple to do.

To all you lovers on chocs, I wish that you find all the reasons to celebrate and, in the process, satisfy all your basest cravings!

Happy Valentine's Day!

Cream Ginger

500 g fresh ginger
100 grams sugar
50 g fresh ginger juice
120 gram milk
50 g butter
9 g gelatin
Soak fresh cream with fresh ginger juice. Caramelize the sugar.
Add fresh cream into the creamed sugar.
Add egg yolk, butter and gelatin.
Mix with a stab blender.
Heat into a tray and leave to set.
When set, put in freezer for 15-20 minutes.
Cut with heart-shaped cutter.
Put on a plate, sprinkle with sugar.
Caramelize sugar with blowtorch.

BAYTO-BO C

BARTON Savoury Lychee French Macaron with Vanilla Ice Cream, Marinated Strawberry

ADD fresh cubes, honey and orange juice. Let it simmer gently.

RETURN the chunks to the pot in one layer, spooning the sauce and vegetables over them. Add enough water to cover.

COOK for 10 minutes in an hour in low heat, stirring occasionally until the meat is tender when pierced with a fork. Check the liquid level every 15-15 minutes while the chunks are simmering and add water as necessary to keep the lamb half-covered at all times.

REMOVE meat and transfer to serving platter

ADD the tomato paste. Saute for a minute. Add red wine, scraping up any browned bits in bottom of the pot. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low. Simmer. Let the sauce reduce for 5-8 minutes.

Bold, rich and spicy Valentine's Day dish

Text by Virgie Baga-Reyes
Photos by Rudel Reoma

YES, LOVE IS IN THE AIR.

For those of you who want a memorable Valentine's Day celebration by impressing the significant other with your culinary skills, here is a rare, exotic dish for that romantic candlelit dinner a-la-carte at home.

Moroccan-style Lamb Shanks Tagine, prepared by 22-year-old chef Paolo Ong of Chelsea Market and Café at Serendra, Bonifacio Global City [tel. 8887915], for reservations, is boldly and richly spiced, typical of Moroccan cooking.

The lamb is cooked with different Moroccan spices and gently simmered with veg- etables, red wine, honey, preserved fruits, and spices like cinnamon, cumin and cayenne pepper. Some cooks may even add saffron and turmeric.

This dish is often served with couscous, another staple of Moroccan cuisine.

Ong recommends slow cooking for this recipe, which can be a wonderful and hearty main dish, to moderate the tough shanks. After a long braising time, the lamb, which should be tantalizingly tender by then, is infused with all the warm, soft flavors of the spices.

Lamb shanks are available in most supermarkets for P268.37/100 a kilo. The various kinds of spices can also be purchased in the same places.

Since the dish is so rich and complex, you can have just some plain rice or polenta, or some crusty bread and a green salad with it.

The dish may be time-consuming to make, but you will find it is all worth the effort when you receive the compliments, especially from that special someone.

Of course, if you have no time to cook the lamb yourself, you and your date can just go to Chelsea, which is open from lunchtime to midnight. At Chelsea, the lamb shanks are often served with roasted organic vegetables and couscous.

If you decide to cook, make sure to prepare all the ingredients and measure out all the spices before you begin.

Ingredients
4 pc lamb shank
Vegetable oil
Spice rub:
½ t cinnamon, ground
½ t cumin, ground
¼ t cayenne pepper
½ t salt
Braising liquid:
4 pc white onion, chopped
2 pc carrots, chopped
2 stalks celery, chopped
3 pc cinnamon bark
2/3 t coriander seeds
3 pc bay leaf
Zest of orange
1 t tomato paste
½ cup red wine
1 t honey
1 pc beef stock cube
Water, as needed

For suggestions, e-mail the author at chefpaolo@inquirer.com.ph

SAUTE all ingredients until they release their flavor and aromas for about 2-3 minutes. Mix well.

IN A LARGE pot (or stockpot), add kitchen vegetables, cinnamon bark, seeds, orange zest and bay leaf. Stir.

IN A PAN over medium heat, add oil. Carefully sear the lamb shanks on both sides until browned and crusted, about one minute. Set aside.

COMBINE cinnamon, cumin, cayenne pepper and salt in a bowl and coat meat with this mixture. The meat may be marinated for several hours or overnight, or cooked immediately.

FOR THE LAMB: ... the braising liquid from the pot ... Pour sauce over the lamb. ... with dried fruits or lemon ... Serve with vegetables, ... couscous, rice or mashed potatoes.

Easy-to-do sweet Valentine . . .

From page C1

Sherbet Mango
3 k mango puree
600 g water
200 g sugar
Red food coloring
Add sugar and water and add sugar.
Add mango puree.
Mix in double bowl with ice until the desired texture is achieved.

Caramel Sauce
150 g sugar
75 g water
8 g glucose
½ vanilla bean
Boil water, add glucose and vanilla. Caramelize the sugar.
Add the boiled water into the caramel.
Drizzle over serving plate.

Chocolate Mango Fritters
Mango balls
Chocolate resin
Croissant dough
Roll the croissant dough about 2 mm thick and cut it with the round cutter.
Put the chocolate resin in the center of the dough and on top of the chocolate resin put the mango balls.
Cover with another dough like a sandwich.
Deep fry the mixture. Serve.

Breton Strawberry-Lychee
Sable Breton
60 g egg yolk
180 g sugar crystal
180 g butter
225 g all purpose flour
20 g baking powder
Mix the butter and sugar for about 10 minutes.
Add egg yolk then flour together with the baking powder.
Bake at 150°C for about 20 minutes.
Cut with a round cutter, 5 cm in size. Dipe before cream.

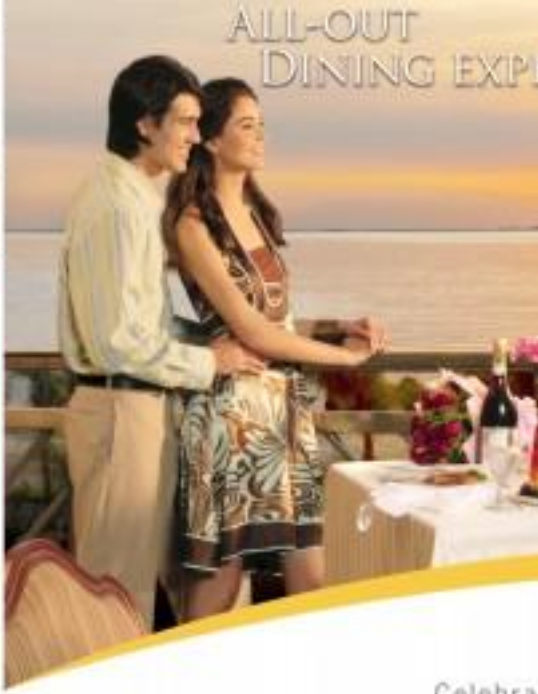
Cream Lychee
200 g milk
80 g egg yolk
80 g sugar
Red food coloring
5 g flour (all purpose)
80 g liquor of lychee
5 g gelatin
400 g whipped fresh cream
Mix the first five ingredients to make a custard cream.
Add soaked gelatin together with liquor of lychee.
Add the whipped cream.

Macaron
300 g egg white
150 g sugar
200 g powdered sugar
200 g ground almond
Whip whites with granulated sugar.
Combine powdered sugar and ground almonds.
Incorporate into egg white mixture.
Pipe into discs.
Let rest in dry 40-45 minutes before baking.
Bake at 130°C for 17-20 minutes.
Top each vanilla ice cream and raise spray.

Marinated Strawberry
200 g water
200 g juice of strawberry
30 g lychee liquor
Boil all ingredients for about 2-3 minutes.
Add fruit strawberry off the fire.

Author gives [illegible]

E-mail the author at inquirer.com.ph



THE CONSUMER

A love affair that has to end

Filipinos should return to reusable things to promote environmental health, conserve resources, reduce wastes and cool the planet

By Linda G. Bohlke

THE VALENTINE'S DAY, THE environmental group EcoWaste Coalition is asking Filipinos to show their love not just for humans but for Mother Nature, too.

Specifically, the coalition wants Filipinos to end their love affair with disposables that is wreaking havoc on the environment and the world's climate. EcoWaste warned that "society's addiction to everything convenience, trendy and glossy is causing a tremendous stress on our dumpsites, rivers, seas and disposal of throwaway products. Once used, produced too many valuable and too much waste.

She encouraged Filipinos to return to reusable things and avoid single-use disposables to promote environmental health, conserve resources, reduce wastes and cool the planet.

Bottled water and disposable cups, spoons, straws, cutlery, plates, bowls, napkins, plastic bags, tableware and large food items are popular this people look to some of their health and environmental cost.

The group pointed out that plastic disposables consumed large quantities of petroleum, aside from not being readily biodegradable. Moreover, the plastic products were often dumped carelessly, clogging the waterways, choking marine animals and causing flash floods, if burned, they released toxic pollutants like dioxins, "the most notorious man-made chemical poison known to science."

This Valentine's Day, EcoWaste Coalition calls on Filipino consumers to have a brave and decent ecofriendly observances, like snubbing bouquets, balloons, stuffed toys, chocolate substitutes, and buying used other reusable carry bags.

For more environmental-friendly tips, e-mail ecowaste.coalition@yahoo.com. The EcoWaste Coalition is at Unit 320, Eagle Court, 20 Jasmine St., 1128 Quezon City; 9350076, fax 4364733.

Not the same

C.C. Lacuna of the three Shopping Network Inc. wants to make it clear it was not their company that sealed Luzon Steele was complaining about infant smell's The Consumer.

Steele, according to Lacuna, was sent to their customer or prospective.

Lacuna claimed that while their company offered "a wide range of quality imported products through shows aired daily on Shop TV (Skycable CH 13, Destiny CH9), we don't have any consistent quantity customer purchase requirements—neither do we require our shoppers to buy products they find if they do not need—as end of any of our products."

Lacuna advised Steele and others who may be planning to buy a product to carefully study the features of any promotion advertising agency or company introducing them, either at home shopping or claim to be an affiliate or sister company of SSN. Only SSN sells SSN products and every product to be the only home TV shopping company that provides 24-hour customer service."

SSN, Lacuna said, even aired regular advisories to warn the public against knock-offs and counterfeit products sold in swapper or show rooms or kiosk points.

Local invention

Daniel H. Rodriguez of 208 Leyte st. Kinharon Calumbo City, Laguna (danielrod007@yahoo.com), says Filipinos do not have to look for hi- tech things, sometimes the solutions are at.

Rodriguez was reacting to a New York Times article about a team developed for developing countries, with the assistance of the Shell Foundation.

Rodriguez says this team successfully invented double-sided bamboo, and even more considered as much like sliced bread, vegetable peelings, shredded banana, etc.

The users, he adds, is cheaper, costing only about US$6 to little over P200 in today's exchange rate) compared to the US$19 Design Innovation, and also easy to make requiring scissors, sand, sand bars and soapy-scouring of cuts.

He says his users is Indian sound because it is easy to operate and Kalau making gains because it uses much for fuel.

Send letters to The Consumer, Lifestyle Section, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Makarilla and Rizal St., 1800 (fax no. / e-mail lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph)

LUXURY BED LINENS
Protected by Sanitized
More than clean
FAMILY HOME
CLASSIC ELITE 500
JACQUARD with Sanitized

Spice up Valentine's Day

DAICIE ULTIMATE BUFFET AMIDST 'EDSA' TRAFFIC
good food and romance. for Valentine buffet. Spices of the Earth, showcases all things sensuous, exotic and romantic. Fall in love with Kamayan's Cocina Pampanga-the first exclusive Filipino favorites with Spanish and Chinese flavors. Enjoy Salcedo's smoothly-done items with a special commitee. Duck Ultimate Buffet is available for P1695 and P480 per promo days, VAT inclusive. The Valentine buffet is offered in all Cadis branches: SM Megamall, Shangrila 3, Edsa, Pedro Faura and West Avenue (tel. nos. 8928888, 7229835 or 6281720).

CASA ARMAS SPAS like Valentine's Day "To Arms," a special Valentine dinner package for two. Couples can choose from Connie Specialties for P2,595+ or Seafood Specialties for P2,295+. Those who choose this Valentine special will get a gift coupon for a spa massage worth P1,000 and iconic-rated workout pass. Now Shimmers World at Pinoy Road, Casa Armas is at The Podium (687-9000, 687-2070). Greenbelt (757-8987, 757-8987); Makati Avenue (892-9540, 894-2605); and Trinoma (Mindanao City (632-5114).

DANCIE'S gives you 88 appetizing dishes and 21 different thirst-quenchers to choose from this Valentine season. On Feb. 11-17, people who lunch or dine at Dancie's get a sweet surprise for food purchases worth P600. Dancie's meals are suitable for sharing with family, friends or that special someone. Couples who go to Dancie's for lunch or dinner on Feb. 14 get to share a complimentary Triple Chocolate Mini Cake. (For good while supplies last. (8180155 or e-mail dlc_marketing@dancie.com.ph).

FESTIVAL SUPERMALL offers a wide variety of food choices for any time of day or night. Naked saxophonist Vince Lahera plays at the Greens and Grills Feb. 14, 8 p.m. You can also get that special Valentine gift while you are at the mall. Festival offers silver from Lino Monaco, wine lingerie, body care basket from the Beauty Bar, accessories from Bare Essentials, jewelry, etc. from over 800 stores. Festival Supermall is at Filinvest Corporate City, Alabang, Muntinlupa City (6430144).

KUSTOMIZO marks Valentine's Day with "Serenading the Heavens" on Feb. 14. Chef Luis Chikiamco has prepared a six-course menu featuring rare grass and Wagyu beef. "Surrounding the Heavens" is in partnership with Philippine Trade. Diners get complimentary fragrances from Ralph Lauren and Giorgio Armani. Seating is available 6: 30:30 p.m. (5219834-76, 6272386, chikiamco, and 7711339 or 7711192, Westgate Alabang).

CARLO'S offers this Valentine's Day the "all-of-the-home Baby Back Ribs, double-basted with a special barbecue sauce and served with hefty portions of home-style fries and sweet corn on the cob. Get the authentic American Baby Back Ribs grilled over mesquite chips for that distinctive Chili's smoked flavor. Complimentary cookies will be given to those who will have lunch or dinner. Chili's branches are at Greenhill 1, Ayala Center, 887-0727; Northeast Greenhills, San Juan, 727-0988; and Trinoma Mindanao, Quezon City, 912-5810.

BURGOS features special Valentine dishes for the whole month of February. "Four Fabulous Treats" consisting of Baked Fish and Shrimps, Grilled Chicken and Shrimps, Pan-seared Seabass, and Grilled Atlantic White Salmon are available at all Burgos outlets. Capp your meal with Sugar-free Cheesecake, the latest addition to Burgos's desserts. On Valentine's Day, guests will receive special gifts from Burgos, plus red roses for the ladies. Call 9277596, 8926161, 8977868, 7263578, 9106113, 3960091 and 6336286.

WINNERS OF THE VISA OLYMPIC GAMES MEMORABILIA, WEEK OF JANUARY 28, 2008

Helen I. Alforja, Alberto C. Bantaz, Anna Da Dicampo, Delia M. Rosario, Maria Claudia R. Marquez, Angela Anda, Ayrile M. Rivera, Bernhard Yap, Carlos Quaderno, Carmen Otaza, Constancio Leonardo, Cynthia Cleo, Dennis S. Quiroga, Eduardo Ting Tiu, Edwin Bean, Edwin Bernel Mendoza, Elsa Ong, Elmer L. Macapinlac, Frederic Pagador, Isabelle Pe Ng, J. Manuella Sorry Uy Do, Joey Serrao, Jose Rommel Tinoso, Josef Jakosalem, Josephine B. Quinto, Lily T. Chua, Lyndon Villegas, Maria Theresa Agpaoa, Marietta Rios, Marilena Rahana Sidri, Marilou Chua, Marjorie To, Marylyn Villahermosa, Myla Grano, Nestor F. Lapid, Priscilla Fernando, Ricardo Lapuran, Jr., Robert John Garcia, Roberto A. Alonzo, Roger Luis Uy, Rona Joy V. Santos, Rosario B. Alfaro, Rosalyn Bengal, Rowena Bangayan, Sandra L. Lim, Steevan Seridal, Sheryl G. Salbin, Sincerely Tie, Tiong Tjen Ngo, Victoria Buenaventura, Aimee Cagayanan, Anne Marie Cuisenay, Eduardo E. Noel, Elaine Jason, Glenn Nevas, Ma. Cristina Zavalla, Ma. Luisa A. Gozon, Mary Jean Reyes, Roberto Go, Rosario M. Alberoro, Stephen Tala, Wilson Sy, Annie Sinhuaga, Brian Benedict Co, Karen Leung, Klenvin Lo, Marlene Baring, Nelson Sy, Shirley S. Ong, Wilfredo Manaloto, Dexter Lee, Jeffrey Kwa, Jefferson Devezza, Noel Ueda, Reinaldee A. Farooqi, Robinson O. Uy, Zoilmar C. Concepcion, Arlene R. Villaverde, Hector R. Flores, Roderick Dominson Haro.

Winners may call the Visa Beijing Olympics Promo Hotline at (02) 636-3456.

For details, text VISA to 333 for Smart and Talk N' Text, 2261 for Globe and TM, or log on to www.visaapparkny.com. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 07158, Series of 2007. See flyers for more info.

Beijing 2008

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PUBLITE MAS at Westgate Alabang offers a special Valentine dinner buffet with a free chocolate fountain buffet for P788++ per person. At Bar Cal de Sac, one winner will receive red roses while the Cappuccino Strings will serenade diners Feb. 13-15, 7:30 p.m. People who have yet to buy a Valentine gift may want their gift cards. At Sushi-Ya, kids 10 years old and below get a free kiddie Eat Meal with every order of a Bento Box for two. Sugarfoot offers sugar-free, low-calorie special dishes. Thru February, avail of Spa N' Save P1 Day Visit promo for a free foot spa therapy after eight visits. Gymboree presents the Sweethearts of Play promo. Bring a friend along and enjoy a 50-percent discount. Westgate is at Filinvest Corporate City, Alabang, Muntinlupa City (6000011 loc 2191 or visit westgatealabang.com).

THE MANOR at Camp John Hay sets the mood for a romantic Valentine's Day celebration. At Le Chef, couples can enjoy the treats of gastronomic Glen Guerrero creation Jun Lopez. Chef Billy King has also prepared a special dinner set menu with Roasted Rack of Lamb with Mint Sauce, Chilean Sea Bass served with the tangy Pommery Mustard Sauce, in Australian Lamb Collation Rosemary Jus with Shallot & Garlic as main dish. Women get treat flowers and gourmet chocolates. The set menu is available for P1,500 net per person for four courses, or P1,200 net per person for three courses (074-4246001 loc 1508 or 1011, or 074-4246001).

TEQUILA GARDEN CAFE at Cherry Antipolo features Yitang's famous 15th Century favorite dish — Peking Duck — of the Imperial Ming Dynasty. Party reservations, catering or franchising slots are available. E-mail us at tequilagardencafe@yahoo.com.

SUPERB presents "Let the Bourbon Run Roll" and "Let the Jumpin' Fun and Chips" promo this Valentine's Day. Get large servings of Bourbon ribs, corn-on-the-cob and fish and chips on the bucket (tel. nos. 5821606, 5366134 and 6438115).

HEAVENLY DOGS offers All-day Classics, Asian Big Plates, pastas and sandwiches, French toasts and wraps, pancakes, waffles and omelettes. Power-up dishes are Pauly's Popcorned Shrimps, Buffalo Shrimps, Mr Big Plate, The Seafood Basket, Mang-Gambo, Grilled Chicken Caribbean Fiesta, Grandpa's Burger Steak, Grilled Pepper Pork Chop, Tuna Steak Platter, The Great Steak Benedict, among others (tel. nos. 3763674, 8162710, 9131171, 8892791 and 981 3688).

DOWNDRESS Crab An ought by Filipinos in Alaska for dinner

LIFESTYLE

Eating encounters with overseas Filipinos

COUNTRY COOKING
Micky Fenix

WHEN I OPEN MY E-MAIL, I AM always pleasantly reminded how the Internet has indeed made the world smaller.

Words zoom through an invisible highway from so many countries. And if your e-mail address is a generic one like my yahoo.com, you do not really know where the message comes from.

So, when I am asked where readers can buy products that I described or which restaurants serve their favorite dishes, I love to ask where they are writing from.

And very often the answer comes from an overseas Filipino, **a worker or an immigrant**.

Recently, Ronald Gelan, based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, wanted to recommend a place in Manila, a restaurant of his classmate and friend. When I answered, he wrote back: "I'm so much right now waiting for a connecting flight here in, MIA. Those types of lulls are the best time to think about the food that you really enjoy, at least it could ease your mind for the airplane food (which is not to be found I must say, just to be fair to the airline that I'm taking)."

Pleasant diversion

I smiled as I read that thinking how food made for a pleasant diversion for this OFW, something that made you think of home.

And yet Ronald also talks of his favorite restaurants in Riyadh, places where he can unwind from

ADVANCED

Find What You Love at THE PODIUM and THE BLOCK

Make this year's Valentine's day your most memorable one yet by planning the most special celebration at The Podium and The Block. Whether you're spending it with the whole family or that special someone, you're sure to find your most memorable moments here.

Start it off by finding a gift your loved ones will cherish. Whether it's jewelry, clothing, gadgets, or the most adorable stuffed toys, find it all here. Surprise them with a delectable meal at one of the restaurants. Then, cap it off with one of the specially selected musical performances, all set throughout the Valentine's season.

Be serenaded by the deep baritones of the four tenors making up **Angeles**. Witness the grandeur of a 32-piece orchestral performance by the **Manila Philharmonic Orchestra**. Listen to the unique vocal blending of the popular acapella group, **Akafellas**. Finally, sit back and enjoy instrumental renditions of timeless classical love songs as performed by the **Soulful Mood Instrumental Trio**.

Shop, dine, and enjoy the most soulful musical performances, all at The Podium and The Block. We're sure you'd agree, here, the memories you make will be the most unforgettable.

The Lover's Serenade
A special Valentine's concert featuring the Angeles.
Feb. 13, 8pm - The Block
Feb. 13, 8pm - The Podium

Love is in the Air
Be serenaded by the vocal blending of the Akafellas.
Feb. 15, 8pm - The Podium

Hearts in Symphony
Enjoy timeless love songs in a series of heart-warming performances
Manila Philharmonic Orchestra
Feb. 14, 6pm - The Podium
Feb. 14, 6pm - The Block
Soulful Mood Instrumental Trio
Feb. 15, 6pm - The Block

Eating encounters with overseas Filipinos

From page B-1

AN OFW in Hong Kong enjoying dimsum

THE AUTHOR sqeezed between Olivia Corleone Tropa and Jemeel Yosoy

JUST to show you how big those Dungeness crabs in Alaska were

Typical Pinoy

They did what every Filipino would do, ravish a stranger to partake of the food. "Sarap kaya!" They even advised me to buy the dimsum from the wet market and cook it myself because crab was expensive in Hong Kong restaurants.

In Paris, two members of our group were making a documentary on our visit when they were invited by some Filipinos they met on the street to partake of a Sunday lunch.

We opted to keep our appointment with two Filipino artists, arranged by Claude Tayag, himself a visiting artist there.

The documentary makers were treated to a fiesta including specialties that their home cook was easy to order from a Filipino in the city. It seems that no encounter with natives, even if strangers, is complete enough to celebrate.

Not OFWs but expatriates often, Around Easter, and Global celebrates Pinoy Easter, a pleasant afternoon of champagne, wonderful crisp cookies and art. It was at Eunice's studio filled with his classics and finished work, some destroyed by a leak in the roof.

We all went back to our hotel and convened and our conversation ran on and on, rather like time. Across could be might mistaken. Peers and kin in the Philippines who apparently he has done. Tugat still stays in Frisco.

In Alaska, our group was always asked by Filipinos there if we were from the home office. That means the other 49 states of the United States, some of them brought kids and Dungeness crabs, really big ones. We loved that evening of high cholesterol and being with Filipinos who told us they received an allowance from the government for working in that cold state.

At a square dance (yes, they still have that up there), we bonded at the smell of barbecue, our kind of skewered meat with the delicious smoky aroma. It was unmistakably Filipino barbecue and that was confirmed when we saw the booth's name—Barangay.

E-mail the author at yoneyboy64@yahoo.com

Romantic breakfast for two

DRINK A TOAST TO LOVE COMPLIMENTS of The Inn at Mount Makiwalat if you avail of its Heart Two Heart weekend package.

The Inn will offer lovebirds a complimentary bottle of Hayes Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon, with chocolate and fresh fruit basket delivered to the room.

In the morning, couples can enjoy a sumptuous Makiwalat Breakfast Plate at Café Libertea.

The romantic weekend gift package gives couples access to the 18-hole Mount Makiwalat Golf Course. The couple also gets expert lessons or tour/club package at The Artesang Spa, and four sets of swimming pool at the Mount Makiwalat Country Club.

The weekend special costs P11,000 or P5,500/pax. Call 046-7543824 or 046-7500068, or e-mail theinn@mountmakiwalat.com; www.makiwalat.com.

Bakeshop opens branch in Taytay

SCHELLI GOA, FOUNDER AND CEO of The Peach Basket had an unwelcoming guests during the opening of the bakeshop's newest outlet in SM City Taytay in Rizal province.

The friends had a dining area that serves the bakeshop's wonderful pasta, hickory quesadilla, roasted chicken and a hot menu.

The French Baker ensures that the next day's friends are all freshly made by utilizing the baked products at 50 percent discount 30 minutes before closing time.

Meanwhile, the celebration of the First Part of the Bar continues at all French Baker outlets.

The chains offers a bucket of healthy breads, baked products, and fresh cooked meals.

Its warm breads and fresh sandwiches (tuna, ham and cheese) are delicious with many toppings, croissants, sweets, and coffee drinks.

Mini Pandesalitos and cheese muffins, tuna and cream puffs are also available.

Enjoy the French Baker's Spicy Seafood pasta and its pancake of langostin, as the pasta and other new offerings spicy.

Rice and the chain was celebrating all the positive attributes of the year of the rat with the renovation of its 30 stores.

The French Baker's branches can be viewed in and around Metro Manila and in Pampanga, Metro Cebu, Cavite and SM Clark.

CLEAR
BLACK
VALENTINE'S
Piolo
Be Bold. Be Black. Move Closer Anytime.
CLEAR
NO DANDRUFF*
*No visible flakes with regular use
*Per DOH BFAD Permit No. 0185 s. 2008

Mother's home is where the Pinoy foodie's heart is

A nine-nation survey found that eating out for Asians, including Filipinos, means going to their parents' or in-laws' house

By Louis B. Bolido

MANY FILIPINOS MAY BE eating out this Valentine's Day.

But if the results of a recent food survey are any indication, it will not be surprising if they head off to their parents' or in-laws' homes on this day of love.

While the endless opening of new restaurants seems to suggest that Filipinos can eat out a lot, the survey undertaken by Electrolux, a global leader in kitchen and home appliances, and the magazine Reader's Digest suggests that the Pinoy foodie still prefers to go home to Mama for a good meal.

The survey, the largest ever Asian food study covered nine nations and polled a total of 9,000 respondents, or 1,000 from each country.

It found that mother's—either biological or in-law—cooking was still preferred by more than half, 61 percent, of survey respondents.

Filipinos ranked third in 74 percent, after the Thais (80 percent) and Malaysians (76 percent), in preferring to go to their parents' or in-laws' place when they want to dine out.

Also, Pinoys would rather eat at a friend's home (24 percent) than at fast food restaurants (11 percent).

Convenience is the number one reason (74 percent) why Pinoys eat out, with "no time to cook" coming in second at 44 percent.

Valued skill

Filipinos (50 percent) may not necessarily go home as often as the other Asian respondents (the Thais are again number one at 73 percent in this category), but almost all the Pinoys surveyed—97 percent—said cooking was a necessary skill.

They are closely followed by Indians and Thais—at 96 percent.

Pinoys and health experts alike worry that Filipinos may be tuning into couch potatoes, spending their free time in front of the television set, will be happy to know that Pinoys are not as bad—at least, not yet—in other areas.

Only Malaysians, at 14 percent, reported not having meals in front of the TV at least five times a week. Some 17 percent of Filipino respondents said they had meals in front of the TV at least five times a week.

To almost half of the Asian respondents, a good meal means an opportunity to spend time and bond with family and friends. Filipinos, at 48 percent, are third after Indonesia (51 percent) and Singapore (50 percent) in this respect.

Some 47 percent of Filipinos eat breakfast at home every day, second only to Indian (63 percent). More Pinoys (81 percent) eat dinner at home every day, though the percentage fell below Vietnam's 96 percent.

As for lunch, more than half of Pinoys (61 percent) eat at home every day.

Convenience

Among Filipinos, the supermarket (24 percent) has become almost as popular as the wet market (26 percent) as the source of fresh produce. Convenience stores where people shop.

But Pinoys think the freshest food is still to be found in a wet market (79 percent). Some 50 percent think the supermarket has the freshest foods.

Filipinos are likely to use fruits and vegetables within one to two days after purchase, and fish and meat within a week.

They also still prefer local produce: meat, seafood, eggs, vegetables and fruits to imported foods.

Brad Biddle, president of Electrolux East Asia, said, "The first-ever Asian Food and Dining Habits Survey sho hopes carried out in Asia to date, provides us with an industry benchmark by identifying what really motivates Asian consumers when it comes to food and dining. For two months, we gathered opinions and learned about how Asians purchase, cook, serve, store and enjoy their food. This has helped us to understand our customers, the 'real' experts in the kitchen. By listening to them, we reinforce the Electrolux Thinking of 'for' brand platform and are able to create experiences that are truly meaningful."

Marco Francioni, vice president, product development, cooking appliances, said knowing the cooking and eating habits of potential Asia customers, was critical in developing the most functional kitchen appliances possible.

For the survey, Reader's Digest included 360,000 questionnaires in its March 2007 issue to subscribers in Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia and India. Electrolux conducted the same survey separately for Vietnam, Japan and China.

The Electrolux Group will use results of the survey to guide future designs of consumer products particularly those made for the kitchen. (http://www.electrolux.com/press)

COOKING CLASSES

Bass, beef and lamb

CHEF REGINE ARPHELL OF CCB-ducting the following cooking classes:

Feb. 19: Sea Bass— Bake-baked Whole Chilean Bass with Butter Sauce served with Snow-peel Chinese Mushi Unbelievably Complicit, Steamed Bass with Asian Aromatics and Ground Blended Soya served with Chinese Chorizo and Garlic Pesto, Pan-seared Bass with Pork Strips and Mushroom Sauce with Truffle Oil served with Caramel Onions, Tomato Butter-baked Bass with Buttered Shrimp Rice

Feb. 20: Mongolian & Korean Barbecue Buffet—Improvised Mongolian season and All-new Korean barbecue recipes)—Learn to prepare Mongolian barbecue with everything on it, condiments & excellent sauces, Korean Beef & Beef Rib Fingers Bulgogi with secrets of cooked On the spot (optional Class)

Feb. 18: Marketing Roomba (all ages)—Veal Scallopini with Portobello Risotto, Pan-seared Chilean Sea Bass with Truffle-a-Island Mushroom Risotto, Roasted Prime Rib Steaks with Herbed Risotto, Roasted Tenderloin Steak Bacon with Pistachio Macaroni

Creamed Mushroom Chicken with Risotto Primavera

Feb. 20: Mary Ann's Yummy Lamb (all ages)—Garlic and Rosemary Lemon Spice Marinated Roast Leg of Lamb with 2 Exotic & Classic & Condiments, The Best Mexican Lamb Stew with Cervezas, Sea Bass Mediterranean—Lamb Shank Aura-Aura with Chocolate Rajasvng Marinated Lamb Chops with 3 Hot Mint Sauce variations

For complete schedule and requirements, call 09280894907/8936 6500-4888/111. Our new class schedules are out.

Learn the basics

The Maya Kitchens conducting the following classes:

Basic Cake Design 2: Feb. 20-22, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. (cost only for those, making pastillas or pollen, reconditing cake vanilla tan, etc.)

Basic Italians, Feb. 20-29, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. (basic principles of food preparations including proper hygiene, sanitation and safety; safe-Don and nutritional cooking, etc.)

The Maya Kitchens at 8th Floor, Liberty Building, A. Arnaiz Ave. (Paseo Roxas), Makati City; 8921115 to 8929811 loc 108; www.thevayakitchen.com

Native desserts

BACOLOD CHICKEN HAMAL offers some of the popular native desserts for Valentine like Tita's Peanut Brittle and Black Jumbo at Maya, Diet at Bacolod Chicken Inasal in Bacolod Chicken Inasal branches are at Eden Central, Jupiter Street, Greenhills, QC Circle, SM City San Mateo, Robinsons Place Manila, Glorietta 4, Mindpro, Robinsons Galleria, Power, AM Megamall, Power Greens, Tiffanies, SM City Clark and Robinsons Otis.

JUDY Ann Santos tastes Tess's Samara Surprise.

LIFESTYLE

STRAWBERRY Oshkosh and Rose Strawberry Lychee Macarons de Paris

Say it with chocolates

RIZU PATISSERIE LETS YOU say "I love you" in so many ways. Try the 2008 Chocolate Truffle Obsession, a new line of 19 gourmet chocolate truffles. Choose from Caramel-la with Fleur de Sel from France, Rose Champagne Dark Chocolate Truffle or intense Raspberry Vodka Truffle. Also available are vegan free-lactose and Coffee Truffle and Macadamia and Honey truffle. Make your gift more special with the limited 2008 Assorted Truffle Box. Rizu Patisserie is at Greenbelt 2, 757-2498; Alabang Town Center, 850-2498; Glorietta 4, 757-2498; and The Promenade at Greenhills, 724-2498; www.rizupatisserie.com.

2008 Chocolate Truffle Obsession

WHAT'S ON AT ROBINSONS

Watch a performance of the dance princess on stage.

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and wear it every day.

Originally extracted from a meteorite in 1893.
The dazzling brilliance, fire and luster is expertly captured in Moissanite.
Nordic cutlet, the Star Stone. Now available on Earth.

Be delightfully surprised at how the Star Stone is easily within your reach!

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To have to hold

Art ARNELA AVETRIA

A LIFEN

PUGAD BABOY

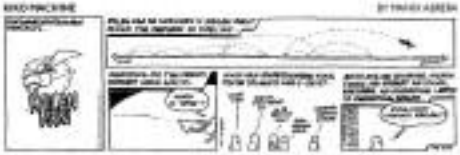
GARFIELD

BABY BLUES

ATOMIC ANDY WEEGY

LOVEWHOTS

WIZARD PANCHINE



BEN

DAILY CROSSWORD

HOROSCOPE

CONCEPTS SUDOKU

Concepts Sudoku

			1		3			
		8				9		
	7		2		5		6	
5		6				3		7
9		3				6		8
	4		9		6		1	
		7				8		
			8		4			

Difficulty Level ★★★

HOW TO PLAY SUDOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

2	9	5	4	9	3	8	1	7
7	4	6	8	2	1	9	3	5
3	9	1	7	6	5	4	2	8
1	5	4	9	7	6	2	8	3
8	3	2	5	1	4	7	6	9
6	7	9	3	8	2	1	5	4
4	1	6	2	3	9	5	7	6
5	2	7	6	4	8	3	9	1
9	8	3	1	5	7	6	4	2

A celebration of food

ROBINSONS PLACE MANILA's Midtown presents "Mom's Flavors, a Celebration of Food, Mirth, Books & Art" until Feb. 29.

Several popular restaurants and dining outlets opened their doors to the Center's mall. Complementing them is a mini book fair by Booksbooks featuring cookbooks and other food specialty books. Images taken by photographer Neil Oshima for the new coffee table book by Wood Sy-Quia, "Kapitbahay," will be featured at the Atrium at 5:30 p.m. today. Barbie Tovar Morgia will perform. Ongoing until Feb. 29 is the one-man show of Philippe B. Buddeus, "Stained Wood: A Stained Opus."

CONGO Mango

FROZEN Mate

Sweet treats

CONGO GRILLE OFFERS Sweets for My Sweet, a delicious trio of desserts for Valentine's. Congo Mango is a light snack dessert made of layers of crushed biscuits with rich vanilla ice cream and slivers of fresh ripe mango. Frozen Mate is vanilla ice cream stuffed with ripe mango rolled in chocolate crepe. The new Coffee Jelly Ice Cream is chewy coffee jelly chunks topped with a scoop of vanilla ice cream. In addition to the desserts, Congo Grille has 29 new menu items. It is giving away Congo Valentine Brownies. Limited edition Congo Heartsick T-shirts sells for P119 with P560 minimum food purchase. Call 910-2189-93, www.congogrille.com.ph.

The One Stop Shop for all Kitchen Needs

In Love at Araneta Center

Follow your heart's desires this Valentine Season. With over 1,500 shops, more than 300 world-class restaurants and foodstops, and a fantastic line-up of concerts, there's something for all the lovers out there at Araneta Center!

ARANETA CENTER EVENTS

GRAND CLEARANCE SALE 70% OFF

SOMBE ENCHANTED EATING AT MANDARIN ORIENTAL CAFÉ & DELI
Upper Ground Floor, Gateway Mall
Feb 13 to 15

NOW UNTIL FEBRUARY 15
Gateway | All Mall | Farmers Plaza
Farmers Market | SM Department Store

FLOWER SELLING
Gateway | All Mall Food Strip
Farmers Market | Shopwise Arcade
Feb 13 to 16

BIG SHOWS AT THE BIG DOME

CONNIE FRANCIS
The Greatest Hits Show
Tonight | 8pm

RE:YO
Live in Manila!
Feb 29 & Mar 1 | 8pm

MAROON 5
Live in Manila!
Mar 6 | Wed | 8pm

2008 BINIBINING PILIPINAS
Grand Coronation Night
Mar 8 | Sat | 8pm

INCUBUS
Light Grenades
Pacific Rim Tour 2008
Mar 9 | Sun | 8pm

EARTH, WIND & FIRE
Experience
Mar 11 | Tue | 8pm

TOTO
Live in Manila!
April 3 | Thu | 8pm

SWING OUT SISTER
Breakout!
April 7 | Mon | 8pm

For ticket inquiries, call Ticketnet at 911 5555 or log on to www.ticketnet.com.ph

COME EARLY AND AVOID THE RUSH • OVER 5,000 PARKING SPACES WITHIN THE CENTER

Japanese noodles

MIDU AT EASTWOOD City draws inspiration from izakayas or Japanese taverns where people traditionally stop after work. It offers special dishes not available in other Japanese food establishments. Try the Yaki Udon, noodle generously with marinated pork, and braised with egg and nori on sizzling plate. Eton is at City Walk 2, 6457806, ext 6617.(EW/CITY)

Chain's new branch shakes things up

BACON Mo devours Regalo has premium smoked bacon strips

AFTER 30 YEARS, SHAKEY'S is shaking things up with several new things.

Tropical Bacon Pizza and Bacon Mushroom Royale are served in the classic unique Filo crust, generously topped with sliced pineapples and premium smoked bacon strips and mushrooms, respectively.

The new Shakey's E. Rodriguez offers a broad entertainment with its refined, bold interiors, including a glamour fireplace and state-of-the-art sound system.

One of the biggest branches, it can seat 260 guests. The "Legacy Wall" showcases music and movie vehicles that are part of Shakey's history.

The first-ever Shakey's FunZone has 12 different imported video game machines like Daytona USA, Air Hockey and Tekken.

Shakey's also offers WiFi (wireless fidelity) connection for those who have to stay connected.

Shakey's E. Rodriguez is managed by a well-trained team committed to providing excellent service.

Meanwhile, the Tropical Bacon Pizza and the new Mediterranean Royale are now available at all Shakey's stores all over the country (Melissa Morello delivers ???????).

THE NEW branch's WiFi capable for teachers

We are the Academy for International Culinary Arts
– the real academy where Great Chefs are made

Diploma in International Culinary Arts and Professional Kitchen Management

February 19

February 23 & 26

MENU PLANNER

Hankyu, your neighborhood mini shop, is giving Mastercard Value Plus (MVP) members a chance to win a brand-edition MVP Menu Planner. Simply present your MVP card with a minimum purchase of P349 and get a scratch card. Get all 12 stickers for a free MVP Menu Planner. Promo ends Feb. 29 (EW/MBJZ. www.mastercard.com.ph)

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Beverly G. Pellarde

Website: www.inquirer.net/entertainment

Mom says Amy is recovering

LONDON — Amy Winehouse's Grammy win drowns the troubled singer, on a break from rehab, in controversy, her mother said in a TV interview. Winehouse's epic but performance for the awards video — broadcast via satellite — means she is overcoming her demons, Janis Winehouse told Britain's GMTV. "It's duty-coming back," Janis said. AP

CHEER FACTOR

Paul-Heather divorce case returns to court

LONDON—Arriving separately and saying little, Paul McCartney and Heather Mills went to court Monday to reach a financial settlement in their acrimonious, high-stakes divorce.

The High Court hearing was called to split up the former Beatle's fortune of as much as 825 million pounds ($1,683 million).

But what happened in Court 34 on the third day of the five-day hearing is shrouded in secrecy. Unlike most British court cases, divorce proceedings are heard in private. The windows of the oak-paneled courtroom were papered over to stop prying eyes, the door plastered with signs reading "No Admittance — Divorce Private."

Mills, 40, looked tense and said nothing as she entered the courtroom in a gray suit and bright pink shirt. Mr. Carthey-Ill, arrived after his estranged wife, in a gray pinstriped suit and a black-and-white striped scarf.

McCartney was accompanied by his lawyer, Fiona Shackleton. Mills, who hired her legal team late last year, is believed to be representing herself.

Some legal sources think McCartney's fortune may be only 200 million pounds (US$396 million), far less than the 825 million pound figure given by the Sunday Times newspaper in its annual Rich List.

Press reports have suggested that McCartney has offered his wife around 25 million pounds (US$50 million) and that she is seeking at least double that amount. AP

HE'S offering $30M, she wants more.

Mills is a former model whose leg was amputated below the knee after a motorcycle accident in 1993. The couple married in June 2002 — four years after the death from breast cancer of McCartney's first wife, Linda — and their daughter was born in October the following year. They announced their separation in 2006 and McCartney filed for divorce, alleging "unreasonable behavior" by his wife.

First 4 entries in directors' fest hared

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

A DRAMA about parachutists. A dance series on food. A thriller about attempted political killings. A comedy set at the wake of a family's patriarch.

These stories have made the cut for a new film festival being mounted by the Directors' Guild of the Philippines Inc. (DGPI) and producer Antonio Tenorio of APT Entertainment.

Tony Reyes, DGPI president, has named the first four entries: Joel Lamangan's "Patrick," Lore Reyes' "Sadiwa Lumbia," Mel Chionglo's "Bente," Avante Tejanera's "Unang Lalake."

Reyes said Isaycon Entertainment that

MORE >>

DID YOU KNOW...

Clockwise and with Amy Yulo

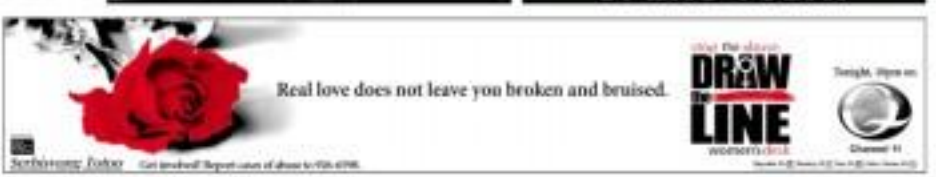
2 docs sued for Ritter's death in '03

GLENDALE, California—A lawyer for John Ritter's family told a jury that he would show doctors caused the actor's death by an improper diagnosis and misdiagnosed treatment.

"They did everything wrong," attorney Dennis Lebovits said in his opening statement Monday at the civil trial in Los Angeles County Superior Court.

Ritter died of a tear in the aorta (aortic dissection) on Sept. 11, 2003, at Providence St. Joseph Medical Center in Burbank.

Ritter's relatives say he was mistakenly treated for a heart attack, and there are suing two doctors for $67M. The suit listed additionally with the hospital and eight medical personnel for about $15M. AP



movietime

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SM STA. MESA
- watch a live acoustic band with your friends while you eat at the "Cinema-history Regular Ala-carte Lounge"
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SM SAN LAZARO
- receive exciting treats that will make your Valentine's extra special

SM PAMPANGA
- write messages from the heart on the "Love Wall"
- be inspired as you listen to a live acoustic performance
- feel the romantic ambience as you watch an MTV of love song collections

SM MANILA
- get a free memorable picture with your loved one at the "Love Booth"

SM CEBU
- receive a free heart-shape paper to write your sweet love messages and have it posted on the "Love Wall"

SM BICUTAN / SM BICAT
- take a sweet picture with your loved one at the "Love Booth"
- express your love in writing on the "Mood of Love" board
- receive special freebies when you watch

SM FAIRVIEW
- enjoy a duet with your loved one as you sing your hearts out at the "SKON Magic Sing Booth"

METRO MANILA

IMAX

PODIUM

LUZON

VISAYAS • MINDANAO

My Bestfriend's Girlfriend

Grace Marian Rivera is a dancer who comes out of a huge cake in a stag party attended by Eric Richard Gutierrez, who's surprised when he learns later that Grace is the girlfriend of his best friend (JC de Vera).

When Eric is dumped by his own girlfriend (Dina Bonnevie), he knew Grace to pretend to be his new girl to make Dina jealous, leading to some unexpected complications.

NOW SHOWING AT SM CINEMA

CINEMA ACCESS: 635-5555

MOVIEWORLD

ROBINSONS MOVIEWORLD CINEMAS MOVIE GUIDE

www.robinsonsmovieworld.com

GALLERIA

1 JUMPER • TAE	6 LIHIM si ANTONIO
2 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND	7 THE EYE
3 JUMPER	8 Indezime: SELDA
4 JUNO	9 MIST
5 THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES	10 THE BUCKET LIST

NOW SHOWING at INDIESINE

ONE OF 2007'S MOST ANTICIPATED FILMS WILL FINALLY BE SHOWN!

SELDA

ARA MINA EMILIO GARCIA and SID LUCERO

"A GEM OF A CHARMO MOVIE"

"ONE OF THE MORE LIGHTHEARTED MOVIES RELEASED OF LATE, THE CAST ARE AT THE PEAK OF THEIR ACTING POWERS"

"SID LUCERO, EMILIO GARCIA, ARA MINA & BRIGADA DE MEDIA DELIVER POWERFUL PERFORMANCES"

"INTELLIGENT & THOUGHT PROVOKING"

"SID IS ELECTRIFYING & EMILIO IS A REVELATION"

"POWERFUL AND DISTURBING"

SCREENING THIS:
12:30pm / 3pm / 5:30pm / 8pm / 10:30pm

ERMITA

1 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND	6 MIST
2 JOHN RAMBO CLOVERFIELD	7 THE EYE
3 JUMPER	1 JUMPER
4 27 DRESSES THE BUCKET LIST	2 THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES
5 GOOD LUCK CHUCK	3 JUNO

METRO EAST

1 JUNO	6 THE EYE
2 THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES	8 MIST
3 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND	7 THE BUCKET LIST
4 JUMPER	8 GOOD LUCK CHUCK

NOVALICHES

1 MY BEST FRIEND'S GIRLFRIEND	3 JUMPER
2 THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES	4 JUNO

PIONEER

1 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND	3 THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES
2 JUMPER	4 JUNO

STA. ROSA

1 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND
2 JUMPER
3 AMERICAN GANGSTER
4 THE EYE

LIPA

1 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND
2 CLOVERFIELD
3 JUMPER
4 IN THE NAME of the KING

DASMARIÑAS

1 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND
2 JUMPER
3 THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES
4 THE EYE

IMUS

1 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND
2 JUMPER
3 THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES
4 THE EYE

ANGELES

1 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND
2 JUMPER
3 P.S. I LOVE YOU
4 SAW IV

TARLAC

1 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND
2 ALIENS vs. PREDATOR 3
3 CLOVERFIELD

STARMILLS

1 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND	6 P.S. I LOVE YOU
2 JUMPER	3 THE EYE
3 SAW IV	8 DRAGON WAR

BACOLOD

1 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND
2 JUMPER
3 SAW IV
4 ALVIN & the CHIPMUNKS: LOKIE RAMBOK
5 CLOVERFIELD
9 LIHIM si ANTONIO

ILOILO

1 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND
2 JUMPER
3 SAW IV
6 IN THE NAME of the KING
5 ALVIN and the CHIPMUNKS
9 ALIENS vs. PREDATOR 3

LOVE Season Live at MOVIEWORLD

Every ten (3) tickets purchase at Robinsons Movieworld Galleria and Ermita entitles you to surrender your ticket one more chance at a love song for FREE from February 13 to 18. Just look for the Weather Love Booth located at the cinema entry.

At the Cinemas

Glorietta 1	Jumper	Spiderwick Chronicles	The Eye	My Best Friend's Girlfriend
Glorietta 4	Jumper	My Best Friend's Girlfriend	Jumper	Bride
Greenbelt 1	Bucket List	Spiderwick Chronicles	Spiderwick Chronicles	Juno
Greenbelt 3	Spiderwick Chronicles	Jumper	Juno	Good Luck Chuck
Alabang Town Center	Darjeeling Limited	Jumper	Spiderwick Chronicles	Juno
Ayala Center Cebu	Jumper	My Best Friend's Girlfriend	The Eye	Jumper
Market! Market!	Spiderwick Chronicles	Jumper	My Best Friend's Girlfriend	Juno
Trinoma	Jumper	My Best Friend's Girlfriend	Good Luck Chuck	27 Dresses
	Spiderwick Chronicles	Juno	Bucket List	Jumper

At the Malls

- Glorietta — Totally Space
- Greenbelt — Julia Fordham Live
- Alabang Town Center — Jazz Groove Show featuring Johnny Bana!
- Ayala Center Cebu — Pinkland Tulips Month
- Market! Market! — Nirvana Beach Volleyball Mall Tour
- Onstage — Repertory Philippines presents HAMLET
- Ayala Museum — Conversations w/ National Artist Benedicto Cabrera
- Tri-Noma — Serenades at Trinoma featuring Philippines Madrigal Singers

Teens & Kids Zone

Now Open

3rd Level, Glorietta 3

KIDS

Baby Connect Digital, Babyhood, Bench, Bo Kids, Bright Stars, Bug & Snail, Chicco, Cody Del Sole, Corbett, Gift Talk, Gingersnaps, Handy & Karen, Kids of Boys, Mini Boo, Mod My Dad, Orange Tulip, Outdoor Kitsch, Papemelroti, Pink Boo, Sanrio, Shine Bee, Soybean, Blue Bee, Buffalo, Converse, DM Shoe, Fishbelt & Wing, Freestone, Hang Ten, Kashlan, Lee, Nine Nations, Puff Munch, Puma & Prado, Rocky, Sole, Vans, Studio AA, Tomato, Wrangler, X, YMS

TEENS

Adidas, All Board by American Boulevard, Attractions, Bape, Blend, Gift Factory, Got Stuff, Grand Life, H, Hello Kitty, mCOY, Mont Blanc, Soup 2, Spunky, Swell Skirt, Undercover, Vans, Whimsy

SPECIALTY

Bing Suns, Bird Bag, Candy Corner, Cody Carol, Color Shoes, Cowhide, Cubes, Fibers

Last call: Tonight's the night

EVERY YEAR, INQUIRER Entertainment helps readers pick the best Valentine show by asking the artists what they have in store for audiences. This is the list of the 2008 series.

Gary Valenciano

"My Love: An Inspired Soul Valentine Concert," with guests Pasha and Gabriel Valenciano and the Philharmonic tonight, 8:30 p.m. Pacific Grand Ballroom, Westin Hotel Cebu City Hotel

What's not doing a concert, how do you celebrate Valentine's?

I sometimes try to come up with something memorable like dressing up the house with rose petals all over the stairs from the basement to the top floor. I also tried to shock Angeli once by filling her office with flowers. I believe I succeeded.

What's your most romantic Valentine's Day ever?

In the past 24 years with my wife, the most romantic would have to be last year when we went to El Nido, Palawan.

What's an ideal Valentine date?

Nothing that puts any kind of pressure on anyone. For me it's a day spent together with no worries, just taking the time to enjoy the company of one another, to talk, to reconnect, to create memories, to laugh, maybe even cry together.

Who's your fantasy date?

It's still my wife. I'd like to take her on an Alaskan or Scandinavian cruise. I just know it's going to happen soon ... somehow.

What's the most romantic love song?

I love "Woo Hoo Hoo," from the movie "9-1."

If you were not doing a show, who would you watch?

There are a handful of shows I'd like to go to, but... I've never seen Ant Medina in concert. I'd also like to watch Gloc-9 and Grupo Tilapia whip it up as people hit the dance floor.

Why should we watch your show?

If you want to get yourself into more of what love is truly about, I think my show would fit like a glove.

TONIGHT

JOSE MARI CHAN. With guest Sharon Reyes. 8 p.m., Music Museum. Call 891-9999 or 721-0720.

* * *

THE APO. The Bellevue Hotel, North Bridgeway, Filinvest Corporate City, Alabang. Call 771-1888.

* * *

SEX SMITH. Cebu Parklane International Hotel

* * *

JOHN LEGEND, Tom Tolentino, Noelle Cornelius. PICC. Call 551-1000 or 891-9999.

* * *

LUCIA MICARELLI. With guests Steve Blues + Playground and DJ Bird, 4 p.m., Kimberly. The Fort. Call 890-2040 or 0917-8864068.

* * *

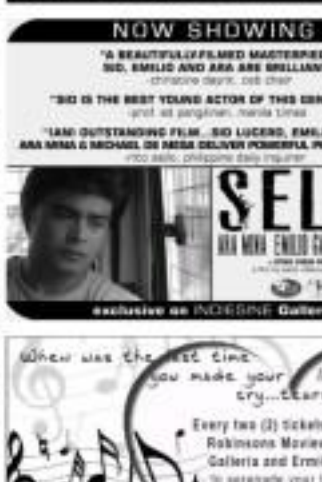
KEIA LEDESMA. Guests Sonny Zuñiga, Mark Escalona and Angelica Shongco La Hoz. Mikati. Call 813-8888.

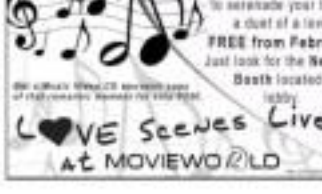
* * *

SITTIE ESCALANTE and Rocco Activity Hall of Intramuros Bar Pilots.

* * *

JOEY ALBERT. Empire Hilltop, Louis Reyes, Ding Mercado. Capitol's Bar, Rhoda Arms. Oriental Hotel, Makati. Call 750-8888 or 891-5820.





First 4 entries...

From page F1

two-song entries will be picked. He said deadline for the completed scripts of the first four entries is Feb. 20. "Fuchsia" and "Rome" are being written by Shaira Lee, "Leviticus" by Lore Reyes, and "Braid" by Rajesh.

Reyes, who also heads the festival committee, urged the public to submit their full-length entries — either horror, romance, or youth-oriented — for the two remaining slots on the Nov. 9 to 16 festival.

"The directors are required to use digital cameras with a 720 resolution or higher," said Reyes, adding that the chosen entries will subsequently be blown up to 35mm film for the festival release.

Post-production could be done at Hong Kong's Digital Magic, Thailand's Digital Post or the Philippines' Optima and Soundtrack. Reyes said.

Invited jurors are being finalized, Reyes said. Regie Jr.